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THE TRAGEDIES  
OF  
ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

IN FIVE VOLUMES

VOLUME IV  
MARY STUART  
A TRAGEDY

LONDON  
CHATTO & WINDUS  
1905



**MARY STUART**

**A TRAGEDY**

ἀντὶ μὲν ἐχθρᾶς γλώσσης ἐχθρὰ  
γλῶσσαι τελείσθω· τοῦφειλόμενον  
πράσσουσα δίκη μέγ' αὐτεῖ·  
ἀντὶ δὲ πληγῆς φονίας φονίαν  
πληγὴν τινέτω· δράσαντι παθεῖν,  
τριγέρων μῦθος τάδε φωνεῖ.  
ÆSCH. *Cho.* 309-315.

I DEDICATE THIS PLAY,  
NO LONGER, AS THE FIRST PART OF THE TRILOGY  
WHICH IT COMPLETES WAS DEDICATED,  
TO THE GREATEST EXILE, BUT SIMPLY  
TO THE GREATEST MAN OF FRANCE:  
TO THE CHIEF OF LIVING POETS:  
TO THE FIRST DRAMATIST OF HIS AGE:  
TO MY BELOVED AND REVERED MASTER

VICTOR HUGO



## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

MARY STUART.  
 MARY BEATON.  
 QUEEN ELIZABETH.  
 BARBARA MOWBRAY.  
 LORD BURGHLEY.  
 SIR FRANCIS WALSINGHAM.  
 WILLIAM DAVISON.  
 ROBERT DUDLEY, *Earl of Leicester.*  
 GEORGE TALBOT, *Earl of Shrewsbury.*  
 EARL OF KENT.  
 HENRY CAREY, *Lord Hunsdon.*  
 SIR CHRISTOPHER HATTON.  
 SIR THOMAS BROMLEY, *Lord Chancellor.*  
 POPHAM, *Attorney-General.*  
 EGERTON, *Solicitor-General.*  
 GAWDY, *the Queen's Sergeant.*  
 SIR AMYAS PAULET.  
 SIR DREW DRURY.

SIR THOMAS GORGES.  
 SIR WILLIAM WADE.  
 SIR ANDREW MELVILLE.  
 ROBERT BEALE, *Clerk of the Council.*  
 CURLE and NAU, *Secretaries to the Queen of Scots.*  
 GORION, *her Apothecary.*  
 FATHER JOHN BALLARD,  
 ANTHONY BABINGTON,  
 CHIDIOCK TICHBORNE,  
 JOHN SAVAGE,  
 CHARLES TILNEY,  
 EDWARD ABINGTON,  
 THOMAS SALISBURY,  
 ROBERT BARNWELL,  
 THOMAS PHILLIPPS, *Secretary to Walsingham.*  
 M. DE CHÂTEAUNEUF.  
 M. DE BELLIEVRE.

Conspirators.

*Commissioners, Privy Councillors, Sheriffs, Citizens, Officers,  
and Attendants.*

*Time—FROM AUGUST 14, 1586, TO FEBRUARY 18, 1587.*





ACT I

*ANTHONY BABINGTON*

SCENE I. *Babington's Lodging : A Veiled Picture  
on the Wall*

*Enter BABINGTON, TICHBORNE, TILNEY, ABINGTON,  
SALISBURY, and BARNWELL*

BABINGTON

WELCOME, good friends, and welcome this good day  
That casts out hope and brings in certainty  
To turn raw spring to summer. Now not long  
The flower that crowns the front of all our faiths  
Shall bleach to death in prison ; now the trust  
That took the night with fire as of a star  
Grows red and broad as sunrise in our sight  
Who held it dear and desperate once, now sure,  
But not more dear, being surer. In my hand  
I hold this England and her brood, and all  
That time out of the chance of all her fate  
Makes hopeful or makes fearful : days and years,  
Triumphs and changes bred for praise or shame  
From the unborn womb of these unknown, are ours  
That stand yet noteless here ; ours even as God's  
Who puts them in our hand-as his, to wield

And shape to service godlike. None of you  
But this day strikes out of the scroll of death  
And writes apart immortal ; what we would,  
That have we ; what our fathers, brethren, peers,  
Bled and beheld not, died and might not win,  
That may we see, touch, handle, hold it fast,  
May take to bind our brows with. By my life,  
I think none ever had such hap alive  
As ours upon whose plighted lives are set  
The whole good hap and evil of the state  
And of the Church of God and world of men  
And fortune of all crowns and creeds that hang  
Now on the creed and crown of this our land,  
To bring forth fruit to our resolve, and bear  
What sons to time it please us ; whose mere will  
Is father of the future.

TILNEY

Have you said ?

BABINGTON

I cannot say too much of so much good.

TILNEY

Say nothing then a little, and hear one while :  
Your talk struts high and swaggers loud for joy,  
And safely may perchance, or may not, here ;  
But why to-day we know not.

BABINGTON

No, I swear,  
Ye know not yet, no man of us but one,

No man on earth ; one woman knows, and I,  
I that best know her the best begot of man  
And noblest ; no king born so kinglly-souled,  
Nor served of such brave servants.

TICHBORNE

What, as we?

BABINGTON

Is there one vein in one of all our hearts  
That is not blown aflame as fire with air  
With even the thought to serve her? and, by God,  
They that would serve had need be bolder found  
Than common kings find servants.

SALISBURY

Well, your cause?

What need or hope has this day's heat brought forth  
To blow such fire up in you?

BABINGTON

Hark you, sirs ;

The time is come, ere I shall speak of this,  
To set again the seal on our past oaths  
And bind their trothplight faster than it is  
With one more witness ; not for shameful doubt,  
But love and perfect honour. Gentlemen,  
Whose souls are brethren sealed and sworn to mine,  
Friends that have taken on your hearts and hands  
The selfsame work and weight of deed as I,  
Look on this picture ; from its face to-day  
Thus I pluck off the muffled mask, and bare  
Its likeness and our purpose. Ay, look here ;

None of these faces but are friends of each,  
None of these lips unsworn to all the rest,  
None of these hands unplighted. Know ye not  
What these have bound their souls to? and myself,  
I that stand midmost painted here of all,  
Have I not right to wear of all this ring  
The topmost flower of danger? Who but I  
Should crown and close this goodly circle up  
Of friends I call my followers? There ye stand,  
Fashioned all five in likeness of mere life,  
Just your own shapes, even all the man but speech,  
As in a speckless mirror; Tichborne, thou,  
My nearest heart and brother next in deed,  
Then Abington, there Salisbury, Tilney there,  
And Barnwell, with the brave bright Irish eye  
That burns with red remembrance of the blood  
Seen drenching those green fields turned brown and  
grey

Where fire can burn not faith out, nor the sword  
That hews the boughs off lop the root there set  
To spread in spite of axes. Friends, take heed;  
These are not met for nothing here in show  
Nor for poor pride set forth and boastful heart  
To make dumb brag of the undone deed, and wear  
The ghost and mockery of a crown unearned  
Before their hands have wrought it for their heads  
Out of a golden danger, glorious doubt,  
An act incomparable, by all time's mouths  
To be more blessed and cursed than all deeds done  
In this swift fiery world of ours, that drives  
On such hot wheels toward evil goals or good,  
And desperate each as other; but that each,  
Seeing here himself and knowing why here, may set  
His whole heart's might on the instant work, and hence

Pass as a man rechristened, bathed anew  
And swordlike tempered from the touch that turns  
Dull iron to the two-edged fang of steel  
Made keen as fire by water ; so, I say,  
Let this dead likeness of you wrought with hands  
Whereof ye wist not, working for mine end  
Even as ye gave them work, unwittingly,  
Quicken with life your vows and purposes  
To rid the beast that troubles all the world  
Out of men's sight and God's. Are ye not sworn  
Or stand not ready girt at perilous need  
To strike under the cloth of state itself  
The very heart we hunt for ?

## TICHBORNE

Let not then  
Too high a noise of hound and horn give note  
How hot the hunt is on it, and ere we shoot  
Startle the royal quarry ; lest your cry  
Give tongue too loud on such a trail, and we  
More piteously be rent of our own hounds  
Than he that went forth huntsman too, and came  
To play the hart he hunted.

## BABINGTON

Ay, but, see,  
Your apish poet's-likeness holds not here,  
If he that fed his hounds on his changed flesh  
Was charmed out of a man and bayed to death  
But through pure anger of a perfect maid ;  
For she that should of huntsmen turn us harts  
Is Dian but in mouths of her own knaves,  
And in paid eyes hath only godhead on

And light to dazzle none but them to death.  
Yet I durst well abide her, and proclaim  
As goddess-like as maiden.

BARNWELL

Why, myself  
Was late at court in presence, and her eyes  
Fixed somehow on me full in face ; yet, 'faith,  
I felt for that no lightning in my blood  
Nor blast in mine as of the sun at noon  
To blind their balls with godhead ; no, ye see,  
I walk yet well enough.

ABINGTON

She gazed at you ?

BARNWELL

Yes, 'faith ; yea, surely ; take a Puritan oath  
To seal my faith for Catholic. What, God help,  
Are not mine eyes yet whole then ? am I blind  
Or maimed or scorched, and know not ? by my head,  
I find it sit yet none the worse for fear  
To be so thunder-blasted.

ABINGTON

Hear you, sirs ?

TICHBORNE

I was not fain to hear it.

## BARNWELL

Which was he  
Spake of one changed into a hart ? by God,  
There be some hearts here need no charm, I think,  
To turn them hares of hunters ; or if deer,  
Not harts but hinds, and rascal.

## BABINGTON

Peace, man, peace !  
Let not at least this noble cry of hounds  
Flash fangs against each other. See what verse  
I bade write under on the picture here :  
*These are my comrades, whom the peril's self  
Draws to it ;* how say you ? will not all in the end  
Prove fellows to me ? how should one fall off  
Whom danger lures and scares not ? Tush, take  
hands ;  
It was to keep them fast in all time's sight  
I bade my painter set you here, and me  
Your loving captain ; gave him sight of each  
And order of us all in amity.  
And if this yet not shame you, or your hearts  
Be set as boys' on wrangling, yet, behold,  
I pluck as from my heart this witness forth  
[*Taking out a letter.*  
To what a work we are bound to, even her hand  
Whom we must bring from bondage, and again  
Be brought of her to honour. This is she,  
Mary the queen, sealed of herself and signed  
As mine assured good friend for ever. Now,  
Am I more worth or Ballard ?



TILNEY

He it was  
Bade get her hand and seal to allow of all  
That should be practised ; he is wise.

BABINGTON

Ay, wise !

He was in peril too, he said, God wot,  
And must have surety of her, he ; but I,  
'Tis I that have it, and her heart and trust,  
See all here else, her trust and her good love  
Who knows mine own heart of mine own hand writ  
And sent her for assurance.

SALISBURY

This we know ;  
What we would yet have certified of you  
Is her own heart sent back, you say, for yours.

BABINGTON

I say? not I, but proof says here, cries out  
Her perfect will and purpose. Look you, first  
She writes me what good comfort hath she had  
To know by letter mine estate, and thus  
Reknit the bond of our intelligence,  
As grief was hers to live without the same  
This great while past ; then lovingly commends  
In me her own desire to avert betimes  
Our enemies' counsel to root out our faith  
With ruin of us all ; for so she hath shown  
All Catholic princes what long since they have wrought  
Against the king of Spain ; and all this while

The Catholics naked here to all misuse  
Fall off in numbered force, in means and power,  
And if we look not to it shall soon lack strength  
To rise and take that hope or help by the hand  
Which time shall offer them ; and see for this  
What heart is hers ! she bids you know of me  
Though she were no part of this cause, who holds  
Worthless her own weighed with the general weal,  
She will be still most willing to this end  
To employ therein her life and all she hath  
Or in this world may look for.

TICHBORNE

This rings well ;

But by what present mean prepared doth hers  
Confirm your counsel ? or what way set forth  
So to prevent our enemies with good speed  
That at the goal we find them not, and there  
Fall as men broken ?

BABINGTON

Nay, what think you, man,

Or what esteem of her, that hope should lack  
Herein her counsel ? hath she not been found  
Most wary still, clear-spirited, bright of wit,  
Keen as a sword's edge, as a bird's eye swift,  
Man-hearted ever ? First, for crown and base  
Of all this enterprise, she bids me here  
Examine with good heed of good event  
What power of horse and foot among us all  
We may well muster, and in every shire  
Choose out what captain for them, if we lack

For the main host a general ;—as indeed  
Myself being bound to bring her out of bonds  
Or here with you cut off the heretic queen  
Could take not this on me ;—what havens, towns,  
What ports to north and west and south, may we  
Assure ourselves to hold in certain hand  
For entrance and receipt of help from France,  
From Spain, or the Low Countries ; in what place  
Draw our main head together ; for how long  
Raise for this threefold force of foreign friends  
Wage and munition, or what harbours choose  
For these to land ; or what provision crave  
Of coin at need or armour ; by what means  
The six her friends deliberate to proceed ;  
And last the manner how to get her forth  
From this last hold wherein she newly lies :  
These heads hath she set down, and bids me take  
Of all seven points counsel and common care  
With as few friends as may be of the chief  
Ranged on our part for actors ; and thereon  
Of all devised with diligent speed despatch  
Word to the ambassador of Spain in France,  
Who to the experience past of all the estate  
Here on this side aforetime that he hath  
Shall join goodwill to serve us.

## TILNEY

Ay, no more ?  
Of us no more I mean, who being most near  
To the English queen our natural mistress born  
Take on our hands, her household pensioners',  
The stain and chiefest peril of her blood  
Shed by close violence under trust ; no word,

No care shown further of our enterprise  
That flowers to fruit for her sake ?

## BABINGTON

Fear not that ;

Abide till we draw thither—ay—she bids  
Get first assurance of such help to come,  
And take thereafter, what before were vain,  
Swift order to provide arms, horses, coin,  
Wherewith to march at word from every shire  
Given by the chief ; and save these principals  
Let no man's knowledge less in place partake  
The privy ground we move on, but set forth  
For entertainment of the meaner ear  
We do but fortify us against the plot  
Laid of the Puritan part in all this realm  
That have their general force now drawn to head  
In the Low Countries, whence being home returned  
They think to spoil us utterly, and usurp  
Not from her only and all else lawful heirs  
The kingly power, but from their queen that is  
(As we may let the bruit fly forth disguised)  
Wrest that which now she hath, if she for fear  
Take not their yoke upon her, and therefrom  
Catch like infection from plague-tainted air  
The purulence of their purity ; with which plea  
We so may stablish our confederacies  
As wrought but for defence of lands, lives, goods,  
From them that would cut off our faith and these ;  
No word writ straight or given directly forth  
Against the queen, but rather showing our will  
Firm to maintain her and her lineal heirs,  
*Myself* (she saith) *not named*. Ha, gallant souls,

Hath our queen's craft no savour of sweet wit,  
No brain to help her heart with?

TICHBORNE

But our end—

No word of this yet?

BABINGTON

And a good word, here,  
And worth our note, good friend; being thus pre-  
pared,  
Time then shall be to set our hands on work  
And straight thereon take order that she may  
Be suddenly transported out of guard,  
Not tarrying till our foreign force come in,  
Which then must make the hotter haste; and seeing  
We can make no day sure for our design  
Nor certain hour appointed when she might  
Find other friends at hand on spur of the act  
To take her forth of prison, ye should have  
About you always, or in court at least,  
Scouts furnished well with horses of good speed  
To bear the tiding to her and them whose charge  
Shall be to bring her out of bonds, that these  
May be about her ere her keeper have word  
What deed is freshly done; in any case,  
Ere he can make him strong within the house  
Or bear her forth of it: and need it were  
By divers ways to send forth two or three  
That one may pass if one be stayed; nor this  
Should we forget, to assay in the hour of need  
To cut the common posts off; by this plot  
May we steer safe, and fall not miserably,

As they that laboured heretofore herein,  
Through overhaste to stir upon this side  
Ere surety make us strong of strangers' aid.  
And if at first we bring her forth of bonds,  
Be well assured, she bids us—as I think  
She doubts not me that I should let this slip,  
Forget so main a matter—well assured  
To set her in the heart of some strong host,  
Or strength of some good hold, where she may stay  
Till we be mustered and the ally drawn in ;  
For should the queen, being scatheless of us yet  
As we unready, fall upon her flight,  
The bird untimely fled from snare to snare  
Should find being caught again a narrower hold  
Whence she should fly forth never, if cause indeed  
Should seem not given to use her worse ; and we  
Should be with all extremity pursued,  
To her more grief ; for this should grieve her more  
Than what might heaviest fall upon her.

TILNEY

Ay ?

She hath had then work enough to do to weep  
For them that bled before ; Northumberland,  
The choice of all the north spoiled, banished, slain,  
Norfolk that should have ringed the fourth sad time  
The fairest hand wherewith fate ever led  
So many a man to deathward, or sealed up  
So many an eye from sunlight.

BABINGTON

By my head,

Which is the main stake of this cast, I swear  
There is none worth more than a tear of hers

That man wears living or that man might lose,  
Borne upright in the sun, or for her sake  
Bowed down by theirs she weeps for : nay, but hear ;  
She bids me take most vigilant heed, that all  
May prosperously find end assured, and you  
Conclude with me in judgment ; to myself  
As chief of trust in my particular  
Refers you for assurance, and commends  
To counsel seasonable and time's advice  
Your common resolution ; and again,  
If the design take yet not hold, as chance  
For all our will may turn it, we should not  
Pursue her transport nor the plot laid else  
Of our so baffled enterprise ; but say  
When this were done we might not come at her  
Being by mishap close guarded in the Tower  
Or some strength else as dangerous, yet, she saith,  
For God's sake leave not to proceed herein  
To the utmost undertaking ; for herself  
At any time shall most contentedly  
Die, knowing of our deliverance from the bonds  
Wherein as slaves we are holden.

BARNWELL

So shall I,  
Knowing at the least of her enfranchisement  
Whose life were worth the whole blood shed o' the  
world  
And all men's hearts made empty.

BABINGTON

Ay, good friend,  
Here speaks she of your fellows, that some stir

Might be in Ireland laboured to begin  
Some time ere we take aught on us, that thence  
The alarm might spring right on the part opposed  
To where should grow the danger : she meantime  
Should while the work were even in hand assay  
To make the Catholics in her Scotland rise  
And put her son into their hands, that so  
No help may serve our enemies thence ; again,  
That from our plots the stroke may come, she thinks  
To have some chief or general head of all  
Were now most apt for the instant end ; wherein  
I branch not off from her in counsel, yet  
Conceive not how to send the appointed word  
To the earl of Arundel now fast in bonds  
Held in the Tower she spake of late, who now  
Would have us give him careful note of this,  
Him or his brethren ; and from oversea  
Would have us seek, if he be there at large,  
To the young son of dead Northumberland,  
And Westmoreland, whose hand and name, we  
know,  
May do much northward ; ay, but this we know,  
How much his hand was lesser than his name  
When proof was put on either ; and the lord  
Paget, whose power is in some shires of weight  
To incline them usward ; both may now be had,  
And some, she saith, of the exiles principal,  
If the enterprise be resolute once, with these  
May come back darkling ; Paget lies in Spain,  
Whom we may treat with by his brother's mean,  
Charles, who keeps watch in Paris : then in the end  
She bids beware no messenger sent forth  
That bears our counsel bear our letters ; these  
Must through blind hands precede them or ensue



By ignorant posts and severally despatched ;  
And of her sweet wise heart, as we were fools,  
—But that I think she fears not—bids take heed  
Of spies among us and false brethren, chief  
Of priests already practised on, she saith,  
By the enemy's craft against us ; what, forsooth,  
We have not eyes to set such knaves apart  
And look their wiles through, but should need mis-  
doubt

—Whom shall I say the least on all our side?—  
Good Gilbert Gifford with his kind boy's face  
That fear's lean self could fear not ? but God knows  
Woman is wise, but woman ; none so bold,  
So cunning none, God help the soft sweet wit,  
But the fair flesh with weakness taints it ; why,  
She warns me here of perilous scrolls to keep  
That I should never bear about me, seeing  
By that fault sank all they that fell before  
Who should have walked unwounded else of proof,  
Unstayed of justice : but this following word  
Hath savour of more judgment ; we should let  
As little as we may our names be known  
Or purpose here to the envoy sent from France,  
Whom though she hears for honest, we must fear  
His master holds the course of his design  
Far contrary to this of ours, which known  
Might move him to discovery.

TICHBORNE

Well forewarned :

Forearmed enough were now that cause at need  
Which had but half so good an armour on  
To fight false faith or France in.

## BABINGTON

Peace awhile :

Here she winds up her craft. She hath long time sued  
To shift her lodging, and for answer hath  
None but the Castle of Dudley named as meet  
To serve this turn ; and thither may depart,  
She thinks, with parting summer ; whence may we  
Devise what means about those lands to lay  
For her deliverance ; who from present bonds  
May but by one of three ways be discharged :  
When she shall ride forth on the moors that part  
Her prison-place from Stafford, where few folk  
Use to pass over, on the same day set,  
With fifty or threescore men well horsed and armed,  
To take her from her keeper's charge, who rides  
With but some score that bear but pistols ; next,  
To come by deep night round the darkling house  
And fire the barns and stables, which being nigh  
Shall draw the household huddling forth to help,  
And they that come to serve her, wearing each  
A secret sign for note and cognizance,  
May some of them surprise the house, whom she  
Shall with her servants meet and second ; last,  
When carts come in at morning, these being met  
In the main gateway's midst may by device  
Fall or be sidelong overthrown, and we  
Make in thereon and suddenly possess  
The house whence lightly might we bear her forth  
Ere help came in of soldiers to relief  
Who lie a mile or half a mile away  
In several lodgings : but howe'er this end  
She holds her bounden to me all her days  
Who proffer me to hazard for her love,

And doubtless shall as well esteem of you  
Or scarce less honourably, when she shall know  
Your names who serve beneath me ; so commends  
Her friend to God, and bids me burn the word  
That I would wear at heart for ever ; yet,  
Lest this sweet scripture haply write us dead,  
Where she set hand I set my lips, and thus  
Rend mine own heart with her sweet name, and end.  
*[Tears the letter.]*

SALISBURY

She hath chosen a trusty servant.

BABINGTON

Ay, of me ?  
What ails you at her choice ? was this not I  
That laid the ground of all this work, and wrought  
Your hearts to shape for service ? or perchance  
The man was you that took this first on him,  
To serve her dying and living, and put on  
The bloodred name of traitor and the deed  
Found for her sake not murderous ?

SALISBURY

Why, they say  
First Gifford put this on you, Ballard next,  
Whom he brought over to redeem your heart  
Half lost for doubt already, and refresh  
The flagging flame that fired it first, and now  
Fell faltering half in ashes, whence his breath  
Hardly with hard pains quickened it and blew  
The grey to red rekindling.

## BABINGTON

Sir, they lie  
Who say for fear I faltered, or lost heart  
For doubt to lose life after ; let such know  
It shames me not though I were slow of will  
To take such work upon my soul and hand  
As killing of a queen ; being once assured,  
Brought once past question, set beyond men's doubts  
By witness of God's will borne sensibly,  
Meseems I have swerved not.

## SALISBURY

Ay, when once the word  
Was washed in holy water, you would wear  
Lightly the name so hallowed of priests' lips  
That men spell murderer ; but till Ballard spake  
The shadow of her slaying whom we shall strike  
Was ice to freeze your purpose.

## TICHBORNE

Friend, what then ?  
Is this so small a thing, being English born,  
To strike the living empire here at heart  
That is called England ? stab her present state,  
Give even her false-faced likeness up to death,  
With hands that smite a woman ? I that speak,  
Ye know me if now my faith be firm, and will  
To do faith's bidding ; yet it wrings not me  
To say I was not quick nor light of heart,  
Though moved perforce of will unwillingly,  
To take in trust this charge upon me.

## BARNWELL

## I

With all good will would take, and give God thanks,  
The charge of all that falter in it : by heaven,  
To hear in the end of doubts and doublings heaves  
My heart up as with sickness. Why, by this  
The heretic harlot that confounds our hope  
Should be made carrion, with those following four  
That were to wait upon her dead : all five  
Live yet to scourge God's servants, and we prate  
And threaten here in painting : by my life,  
I see no more in us of life or heart  
Than in this heartless picture.

## BABINGTON

Peace again ;

Our purpose shall not long lack life, nor they  
Whose life is deadly to the heart of ours  
Much longer keep it ; Burghley, Walsingham,  
Hunsdon and Knowles, all these four names writ out,  
With hers at head they worship, are but now  
As those five several letters that spell death  
In eyes that read them right. Give me but faith  
A little longer : trust that heart awhile  
Which laid the ground of all our glories ; think  
I that was chosen of our queen's friends in France,  
By Morgan's hand there prisoner for her sake  
On charge of such a deed's device as ours  
Commended to her for trustiest, and a man  
More sure than might be Ballard and more fit  
To bear the burden of her counsels—I  
Can be not undeserving, whom she trusts,  
That ye should likewise trust me ; seeing at first

She writes me but a thankful word, and this,  
God wot, for little service ; I return  
For aptest answer and thankworthiest meed  
Word of the usurper's plotted end, and she  
With such large heart of trust and liberal faith  
As here ye have heard requites me : whom, I think,  
For you to trust is no too great thing now  
For me to ask and have of all.

TICHBORNE

Dear friend,

Mistrust has no part in our mind of you  
More than in hers ; yet she too bids take heed,  
As I would bid you take, and let not slip  
The least of her good counsels, which to keep  
No whit proclaims us colder than herself  
Who gives us charge to keep them ; and to slight  
No whit proclaims us less unserviceable  
Who are found too hot to serve her than the slave  
Who for cold heart and fear might fail.

BABINGTON

Too hot !

Why, what man's heart hath heat enough or blood  
To give for such good service ? Look you, sirs,  
This is no new thing for my faith to keep,  
My soul to feed its fires with, and my hope  
Fix eyes upon for star to steer by ; she  
That six years hence the boy that I was then,  
And page, ye know, to Shrewsbury, gave his faith  
To serve and worship with his body and soul  
For only lady and queen, with power alone  
To lift my heart up and bow down mine eyes

At sight and sense of her sweet sovereignty,  
Made thence her man for ever ; she whose look  
Turned all my blood of life to tears and fire,  
That going or coming, sad or glad—for yet  
She would be somewhile merry, as though to give  
Comfort, and ease at heart her servants, then  
Weep smilingly to be so light of mind,  
Saying she was like the bird grown blithe in bonds  
That if too late set free would die for fear,  
Or wild birds hunt it out of life—if sad,  
Put madness in me for her suffering's sake,  
If joyous, for her very love's sake—still  
Made my heart mad alike to serve her, being  
I know not when the sweeter, sad or blithe,  
Nor what mood heavenliest of her, all whose change  
Was as of stars and sun and moon in heaven ;  
She is well content,—ye have heard her—she, to die,  
If we without her may redeem ourselves  
And loose our lives from bondage ; but her friends  
Must take forsooth good heed they be not, no,  
Too hot of heart to serve her ! And for me,  
Am I so vain a thing of wind and smoke  
That your deep counsel must have care to keep  
My lightness safe in wardship ? I sought none—  
Craved no man's counsel to draw plain my plot,  
Need no man's warning to dispose my deed.  
Have I not laid of mine own hand a snare  
To bring no less a lusty bird to lure  
Than Walsingham with proffer of myself  
For scout and spy on mine own friends in France  
To fill his wise wide ears with large report  
Of all things wrought there on our side, and plots  
Laid for our queen's sake ? and for all his wit  
This politic knave misdoubts me not, whom ye

Hold yet too light and lean of wit to pass  
Unspied of wise men on our enemies' part,  
Who have sealed the subtlest eyes up of them all.

## TICHBORNE

That would I know ; for if they be not blind,  
But only wink upon your proffer, seeing  
More than they let your own eyes find or fear,  
Why, there may lurk a fire to burn us all  
Masked in them with false blindness.

## BABINGTON

Hear you, sirs?

Now by the faith I had in this my friend  
And by mine own yet flawless towards him, yea  
By all true love and trust that holds men fast,  
It shames me that I held him in this cause  
Half mine own heart, my better hand and eye,  
Mine other soul and worthier. Pray you, go ;  
Let us not hold you ; sir, be quit of us ;  
Go home, lie safe, and give God thanks ; lie close,  
Keep your head warm and covered ; nay, be wise ;  
We are fit for no such wise folk's fellowship,  
No married man's who being bid forth to fight  
Holds his wife's kirtle fitter wear for man  
Than theirs who put on iron : I did know it,  
Albeit I would not know ; this man that was,  
This soul and sinew of a noble seed,  
Love and the lips that burn a bridegroom's through  
Have charmed to deathward, and in steel's good  
stead  
Left him a silken spirit.



## TICHBORNE

By that faith

Which yet I think you have found as fast in me  
As ever yours I found, you wrong me more  
Than were I that your words can make me not  
I had wronged myself and all our cause; I hold  
No whit less dear for love's sake even than love  
Faith, honour, friendship, all that all my days  
Was only dear to my desire, till now  
This new thing dear as all these only were  
Made all these dearer. If my love be less  
Toward you, toward honour or this cause, then think  
I love my wife not either, whom you know  
How close at heart I cherish, but in all  
Play false alike. Lead now which way you will,  
And wear what likeness; though to all men else  
It look not smooth, smooth shall it seem to me,  
And danger be not dangerous; where you go,  
For me shall wildest ways be safe, and straight  
For me the steepest; with your eyes and heart  
Will I take count of life and death, and think  
No thought against your counsel: yea, by heaven,  
I had rather follow and trust my friend and die  
Than halt and hark mistrustfully behind  
To live of him mistrusted.

## BABINGTON

Why, well said:

Strike hands upon it; I think you shall not find  
A trustless pilot of me. Keep we fast,  
And hold you fast my counsel, we shall see  
The state high-builed here of heretic hope

Shaken to dust and death. Here comes more proof  
To warrant me no liar. You are welcome, sirs ;

*Enter BALLARD, disguised, and SAVAGE*

Good father captain, come you plumed or cowed,  
Or stoled or sworded, here at any hand  
The true heart bids you welcome.

BALLARD

Sir, at none

Is folly welcome to mine ears or eyes.  
Nay, stare not on me stormily ; I say,  
I bid at no hand welcome, by no name,  
Be it ne'er so wise or valiant on men's lips,  
Pledge health to folly, nor forecast good hope  
For them that serve her, I, but take of men  
Things ill done ill at any hand alike.  
Ye shall not say I cheered you to your death,  
Nor would, though nought more dangerous than  
your death  
Or deadlier for our cause and God's in ours  
Were here to stand the chance of, and your blood  
Shed vainly with no seed for faith to sow  
Should be not poison for men's hopes to drink.  
What is this picture? Have ye sense or souls,  
Eyes, ears, or wits to take assurance in  
Of how ye stand in strange men's eyes and ears,  
How fare upon their talking tongues, how dwell  
In shot of their suspicion, and sustain  
How great a work how lightly? Think ye not  
These men have ears and eyes about your ways,  
Walk with your feet, work with your hands, and  
watch

When ye sleep sound and babble in your sleep ?  
What knave was he, or whose man sworn and spy,  
That drank with you last night ? whose hireling lip  
Was this that pledged you, Master Babington,  
To a foul quean's downfall and a fair queen's rise ?  
Can ye not seal your tongues from tavern speech,  
Nor sup abroad but air may catch it back,  
Nor think who set that watch upon your lips  
Yourselves can keep not on them ?

BABINGTON

What, my friends !

Here is one come to counsel, God be thanked,  
That bears commission to rebuke us all.  
Why, hark you, sir, you that speak judgment, you  
That take our doom upon your double tongue  
To sentence and accuse us with one breath,  
Our doomsman and our justicer for sin,  
Good Captain Ballard, Father Fortescue,  
Who made you guardian of us poor men, gave  
Your wisdom wardship of our follies, chose  
Your faith for keeper of our faiths, that yet  
Were never taxed of change or doubted ? You,  
'Tis you that have an eye to us, and take note  
What time we keep, what place, what company,  
How far may wisdom trust us to be wise  
Or faith esteem us faithful, and yourself  
Were once the hireling hand and tongue and eye  
That waited on this very Walsingham  
To spy men's counsels and betray their blood  
Whose trust had sealed you trusty ? By God's light,  
A goodly guard I have of you, to crave  
What man was he I drank with yesternight,  
What name, what shape, what habit, as, forsooth,

Were I some statesman's knave and spotted spy,  
The man I served, and cared not how, being dead,  
His molten gold should glut my throat in hell,  
Might question of me whom I snared last night,  
Make inquisition of his face, his gait,  
His speech, his likeness. Well, be answered then  
By God, I know not ; but God knows I think  
The spy most dangerous on my secret walks  
And witness of my ways most worth my fear  
And deadliest listener to devour my speech  
Now questions me of danger, and the tongue  
Most like to sting my trust and life to death  
Now taxes mine of rashness.

## BALLARD

Is he mad ?

Or are ye brainsick all with heat of wine  
That stand and hear him rage like men in storms  
Made drunk with danger ? have ye sworn with him  
To die the fool's death too of furious fear  
And passion scared to slaughter of itself ?  
Is there none here that knows his cause or me,  
Nor what should save or spoil us ?

## TICHBORNE

Friend, give ear ;  
For God's sake, yet be counselled.

## BABINGTON

Ay, for God's !  
What part hath God in this man's counsels ? nay,  
Take you part with him ; nay, in God's name go ;

What should you do to bide with me ? turn back ;  
There stands your captain.

## SAVAGE

Hath not one man here  
One spark in spirit or sprinkling left of shame ?  
I that looked once for no such fellowship,  
But soldier's hearts in shapes of gentlemen,  
I am sick with shame to hear men's jangling tongues  
Outnoise their swords unbloodied. Hear me, sirs ;  
My hand keeps time before my tongue, and hath  
But wit to speak in iron ; yet as now  
Such wit were sharp enough to serve our turn  
That keenest tongues may serve not. One thing  
sworn  
Calls on our hearts ; the queen must singly die,  
Or we, half dead men now with dallying, must  
Die several deaths for her brief one, and stretched  
Beyond the scope of sufferance ; wherefore here  
Choose out the man to put this peril on  
And gird him with this glory ; let him pass  
Straight hence to court, and through all stays of state  
Strike death into her heart.

## BABINGTON

Why, this rings right ;  
Well said, and soldierlike ; do thus, and take  
The vanguard of us all for honour.

## SAVAGE

Ay,  
Well would I go, but seeing no courtly suit  
Like yours, her servants and her pensioners,

The doorkeepers will bid my baseness back  
From passage to her presence.

BABINGTON

O, for that,  
Take this and buy ; nay, start not from your word ;  
You shall not.

SAVAGE

Sir, I shall not.

BABINGTON

Here's more gold ;  
Make haste, and God go with you ; if the plot  
Be blown on once of men's suspicious breath,  
We are dead, and all die bootless deaths—be swift—  
And her we have served we shall but surely slay.  
I will make trial again of Walsingham  
If he misdoubt us. O, my cloak and sword—

*[Knocking within.]*

I will go forth myself. What noise is that ?  
Get you to Gage's lodging ; stay not here ;  
Make speed without for Westminster ; perchance  
There may we safely shift our shapes and fly,  
If the end be come upon us.

BALLARD

It is here.  
Death knocks at door already. Fly ; farewell.

BABINGTON

I would not leave you—but they know you not—  
You need not fear, being found here singly.

BALLARD

No.

BABINGTON

Nay, halt not, sirs ; no word but haste ; this way,  
Ere they break down the doors. God speed us well !

*[Exeunt all but BALLARD. As they go out  
enter an Officer with Soldiers.]*

OFFICER

Here's one fox yet by the foot ; lay hold on him.

BALLARD

What would you, sirs?

OFFICER

Why, make one foul bird fast,  
Though the full flight be scattered : for their kind  
Must prey not here again, nor here put on  
The jay's loose feathers for the raven priest's  
To mock the blear-eyed marksman : these plucked  
off

Shall show the nest that sent this fledgeling forth,  
Hatched in the hottest holy nook of hell.

BALLARD

I am a soldier.

OFFICER

Ay, the badge we know  
Whose broidery signs the shoulders of the file

That Satan marks for Jesus. Bind him fast :  
Blue satin and slashed velvet and gold lace,  
Methinks we have you, and the hat's band here  
So seemly set with silver buttons, all  
As here was down in order ; by my faith,  
A goodly ghostly friend to shrive a maid  
As ever kissed for penance : pity 'tis  
The hangman's hands must hallow him again  
When this lay slough slips off, and twist one rope  
For priest to swing with soldier. Bring him hence.  
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *Chartley*MARY STUART *and* MARY BEATON

MARY STUART

We shall not need keep house for fear to-day ;  
The skies are fair and hot ; the wind sits well  
For hound and horn to chime with. I will go.

MARY BEATON

How far from this to Tixall ?

MARY STUART

Nine or ten  
Or what miles more I care not ; we shall find  
Fair field and goodly quarry, or he lies,  
The gospeller that bade us to the sport,  
Protesting yesternight the shire had none  
To shame Sir Walter Aston's. God be praised,



I take such pleasure yet to back my steed  
And bear my crossbow for a deer's death well,  
I am almost half content—and yet I lie—  
To ride no harder nor more dangerous heat  
And hunt no beast of game less gallant.

MARY BEATON

Nay,

You grew long since more patient.

MARY STUART

Ah, God help !

What should I do but learn the word of him  
These years and years, the last word learnt but one,  
That ever I loved least of all sad words ?  
The last is death for any soul to learn,  
The last save death is patience.

MARY BEATON

Time enough

We have had ere death of life to learn it in  
Since you rode last on wilder ways than theirs  
That drive the dun deer to his death.

MARY STUART

Eighteen—

How many more years yet shall God mete out  
For thee and me to wait upon their will  
And hope or hope not, watch or sleep, and dream  
Awake or sleeping ? surely fewer, I think,  
Than half these years that all have less of life  
Than one of those more fleet that flew before.  
I am yet some ten years younger than this queen,

Some nine or ten ; but if I die this year  
And she some score years longer than I think  
Be royal-titled, in one year of mine  
I shall have lived the longer life, and die  
The fuller-fortuned woman. Dost thou mind  
The letter that I writ nigh two years gone  
To let her wit what privacies of hers  
Our trusty dame of Shrewsbury's tongue made mine  
Ere it took fire to sting her lord and me?  
How thick soe'er o'erscurfed with poisonous lies,  
Of her I am sure it lied not ; and perchance  
I did the wiselier, having writ my fill,  
Yet to withhold the letter when she sought  
Of me to know what villainies had it poured  
In ears of mine against her innocent name :  
And yet thou knowest what mirthful heart was mine  
To write her word of these, that had she read  
Had surely, being but woman, made her mad,  
Or haply, being not woman, had not. 'Faith,  
How say'st thou? did I well?

MARY BEATON

Ay, surely well  
To keep that back you did not ill to write.

MARY STUART

I think so, and again I think not ; yet  
The best I did was bid thee burn it. She,  
That other Bess I mean of Hardwick, hath  
Mixed with her gall the fire at heart of hell,  
And all the mortal medicines of the world  
To drug her speech with poison ; and God wot  
Her daughter's child here that I bred and loved,

Bess Pierpoint, my sweet bedfellow that was,  
Keeps too much savour of her grandam's stock  
For me to match with Nau ; my secretary  
Shall with no slip of hers engraft his own,  
Begetting shame or peril to us all  
From her false blood and fiery tongue ; except  
I find a mate as meet to match with him  
For truth to me as Gilbert Curle hath found,  
I will play Tudor once and break the banns,  
Put on the feature of Elizabeth  
To frown their hands in sunder.

MARY BEATON

Were it not

Some tyranny to take her likeness on  
And bitter-hearted grudge of matrimony  
For one and not his brother secretary,  
Forbid your Frenchman's banns for jealousy  
And grace your English with such liberal love  
As Barbara fails not yet to find of you  
Since she writ Curle for Mowbray ? and herein  
There shows no touch of Tudor in your mood  
More than its wont is ; which indeed is nought ;  
The world, they say, for her should waste, ere man  
Should get her virginal goodwill to wed.

MARY STUART

I would not be so tempered of my blood,  
So much mismade as she in spirit and flesh,  
To be more fair of fortune. She should hate  
Not me, albeit she hate me deadly, more  
Than thee or any woman. By my faith,  
Fain would I know, what knowing not of her now

I muse upon and marvel, if she have  
Desire or pulse or passion of true heart  
Fed full from natural veins, or be indeed  
All bare and barren all as dead men's bones  
Of all sweet nature and sharp seed of love,  
And those salt springs of life, through fire and tears  
That bring forth pain and pleasure in their kind  
To make good days and evil, all in her  
Lie sere and sapless as the dust of death.  
I have found no great good hap in all my days  
Nor much good cause to make me glad of God,  
Yet have I had and lacked not of my life  
My good things and mine evil : being not yet  
Barred from life's natural ends of evil and good  
Foredoomed for man and woman through the world  
Till all their works be nothing : and of mine  
I know but this—though I should die to-day,  
I would not take for mine her fortune.

MARY BEATON

No?

Myself perchance I would not.

MARY STUART

Dost thou think  
That fire-tongued witch of Shrewsbury spake once  
truth  
Who told me all those quaint foul merry tales  
Of our dear sister that at her desire  
I writ to give her word of, and at thine  
Withheld and put the letter in thine hand  
To burn as was thy counsel? for my part,  
How loud she lied soever in the charge

That for adultery taxed me with her lord  
And being disproved before the council here  
Brought on their knees to give themselves the lie  
Her and her sons by that first lord of four  
That took in turn this hell-mouthed hag to wife  
And got her kind upon her, yet in this  
I do believe she lied not more than I  
Reporting her by record, how she said  
What infinite times had Leicester and his queen  
Plucked all the fruitless fruit of baffled love  
That being contracted privily they might,  
With what large gust of fierce and foiled desire  
This votaress crowned, whose vow could no man  
break,

Since God whose hand shuts up the unkindly womb  
Had sealed it on her body, man by man  
Would course her kindless lovers, and in quest  
Pursue them hungering as a hound in heat,  
Full on the fiery scent and slot of lust,  
That men took shame and laughed and marvelled ;  
one,

Her chamberlain, so hotly would she trace  
And turn perforce from cover, that himself  
Being tracked at sight thus in the general eye  
Was even constrained to play the piteous hare  
And wind and double till her amorous chase  
Were blind with speed and breathless ; but the worst  
Was this, that for this country's sake and shame's  
Our huntress Dian could not be content  
With Hatton and another born her man  
And subject of this kingdom, but to heap  
The heavier scandal on her countrymen  
Had cast the wild growth of her lust away  
On one base-born, a stranger, whom of nights

Within her woman's chamber would she seek  
To kiss and play for shame with secretly ;  
And with the duke her bridegroom that should be,  
That should and could not, seeing forsooth no man  
Might make her wife or woman, had she dealt  
As with this knave his follower ; for by night  
She met him coming at her chamber door  
In her bare smock and night-rail, and thereon  
Bade him come in ; who there abode three hours :  
But fools were they that thought to bind her will  
And stay with one man or allay the mood  
That ranging still gave tongue on several heats  
To hunt fresh trails of lusty love ; all this,  
Thou knowest, on record truly was set down,  
With much more villainous else : she prayed me write  
That she might know the natural spirit and mind  
Toward her of this fell witch whose rancorous mouth  
Then bayed my name, as now being great with child  
By her fourth husband, in whose charge I lay  
As here in Paulet's ; so being moved I wrote,  
And yet I would she had read it, though not now  
Would I re-write each word again, albeit  
I might, or thou, were I so minded, or  
Thyself so moved to bear such witness ; but  
'Tis well we know not how she had borne to read  
All this and more, what counsel gave the dame,  
With loud excess of laughter urging me  
To enter on those lists of love-making  
My son for suitor to her, who thereby  
Might greatly serve and stead me in her sight ;  
And I replying that such a thing could be  
But held a very mockery, she returns,  
The queen was so infatuate and distraught  
With high conceit of her fair fretted face

As of a heavenly goddess, that herself  
Would take it on her head with no great pains  
To bring her to believe it easily ;  
Being so past reason fain of flattering tongues  
She thought they mocked her not nor lied who said  
They might not sometimes look her full in face  
For the light glittering from it as the sun ;  
And so perforce must all her women say  
And she herself that spake, who durst not look  
For fear to laugh out each in other's face  
Even while they fooled and fed her vein with words,  
Nor let their eyes cross when they spake to her  
And set their feature fast as in a frame  
To keep grave countenance with gross mockery lined ;  
And how she prayed me chide her daughter, whom  
She might by no means move to take this way,  
And for her daughter Talbot was assured  
She could not ever choose but laugh outright  
Even in the good queen's flattered face. God wot,  
Had she read all, and in my hand set down,  
I could not blame her though she had sought to take  
My head for payment ; no less poise on earth  
Had served, and hardly, for the writer's fee ;  
I could not much have blamed her ; all the less,  
That I did take this, though from slanderous lips,  
For gospel and not slander, and that now  
I yet do well believe it.

MARY BEATON

And herself  
Had well believed so much, and surely seen,  
For all your protest of discredit made  
With God to witness that you could not take

Such tales for truth of her nor would not, yet  
You meant not she should take your word for this,  
As well I think she would not.

MARY STUART

Haply, no.

We do protest not thus to be believed.  
And yet the witch in one thing seven years since  
Belied her, saying she then must needs die soon  
For timeless fault of nature. Now belike  
The soothsaying that speaks short her span to be  
May prove more true of presage.

MARY BEATON

Have you hope

The chase to-day may serve our further ends  
Than to renew your spirit and bid time speed?

MARY STUART

I see not but I may ; the hour is full  
Which I was bidden expect of them to bear  
More fruit than grows of promise ; Babington  
Should tarry now not long ; from France our friends  
Lift up their heads to usward, and await  
What comfort may confirm them from our part  
Who sent us comfort ; Ballard's secret tongue  
Has kindled England, striking from men's hearts  
As from a flint the fire that slept, and made  
Their dark dumb thoughts and dim disfigured hopes  
Take form from his and feature, aim and strength,  
Speech and desire toward action ; all the shires  
Wherein the force lies hidden of our faith  
Are stirred and set on edge of present deed



And hope more imminent now of help to come  
And work to do than ever ; not this time  
We hang on trust in succour that comes short  
By Philip's fault from Austrian John, whose death  
Put widow's weeds on mine unwedded hope,  
Late trothplight to his enterprise in vain  
That was to set me free, but might not seal  
The faith it pledged nor on the hand of hope  
Make fast the ring that weds desire with deed  
And promise with performance ; Parma stands  
More fast now for us in his uncle's stead,  
Albeit the lesser warrior, yet in place  
More like to avail us, and in happier time  
To do like service ; for my cousin of Guise,  
His hand and league hold fast our kinsman king,  
If not to bend and shape him for our use,  
Yet so to govern as he may not thwart  
Our forward undertaking till its force  
Discharge itself on England : from no side  
I see the shade of any fear to fail  
As those before so baffled ; heart and hand  
Our hope is armed with trust more strong than steel  
And spirit to strike more helpful than a sword  
In hands that lack the spirit ; and here to-day  
It may be I shall look this hope in the eyes  
And see her face transfigured. God is good ;  
He will not fail his faith for ever. O,  
That I were now in saddle ! Yet an hour,  
And I shall be as young again as May  
Whose life was come to August ; like this year,  
I had grown past midway of my life, and sat  
Heartsick of summer ; but new-mounted now  
I shall ride right through shine and shade of spring  
With heart and habit of a bride, and bear

A brow more bright than fortune. Truth it is,  
Those words of bride and May should on my tongue  
Sound now not merry, ring no joy-bells out  
In ears of hope or memory ; not for me  
Have they been joyous words ; but this fair day  
All sounds that ring delight in fortunate ears  
And words that make men thankful, even to me  
Seem thankworthy for joy they have given me not  
And hope which now they should not.

MARY BEATON

Nay, who knows ?  
The less they have given of joy, the more they may ;  
And they who have had their happiness before  
Have hope not in the future ; time o'erpast  
And time to be have several ends, nor wear  
One forward face and backward.

MARY STUART

God, I pray,  
Turn thy good words to gospel, and make truth  
Of their kind presage ! but our Scotswomen  
Would say, to be so joyous as I am,  
Though I had cause, as surely cause I have,  
Were no good warrant of good hope for me.  
I never took such comfort of my trust  
In Norfolk or Northumberland, nor looked  
For such good end as now of all my fears  
From all devices past of policy  
To join my name with my misnated son's  
In handfast pledge with England's, ere my foes  
His counsellors had flawed his craven faith  
And moved my natural blood to cast me off  
Who bore him in my body, to come forth

Less childlike than a changeling. But not long  
Shall they find means by him to work their will,  
Nor he bear head against me ; hope was his  
To reign forsooth without my fellowship,  
And he that with me would not shall not now  
Without or with me wield not or divide  
Or part or all of empire.

MARY BEATON

Dear my queen,  
Vex not your mood with sudden change of thoughts ;  
Your mind but now was merrier than the sun  
Half rid by this through morning : we by noon  
Should blithely mount and meet him.

MARY STUART

So I said.

My spirit is fallen again from that glad strength  
Which even but now arrayed it ; yet what cause  
Should dull the dancing measure in my blood  
For doubt or wrath, I know not. Being once forth,  
My heart again will quicken. [Sings.

And ye maun braid your yellow hair  
And busk ye like a bride ;  
Wi' sevenscore men to bring ye hame,  
And ae true love beside ;  
Between the birk and the green rowan  
Fu' blithely shall ye ride.

O ye maun braid my yellow hair,  
But braid it like nae bride ;  
And I maun gang my ways, mither,  
Wi' nae true love beside ;  
Between the kirk and the kirkyard  
Fu' sadly shall I ride.

How long since,  
How long since was it last I heard or sang  
Such light lost ends of old faint rhyme worn thin  
With use of country songsters ? When we twain  
Were maidens but some twice a span's length high,  
Thou hadst the happier memory to hold rhyme,  
But not for songs the merrier.

MARY BEATON

This was one  
That I would sing after my nurse, I think,  
And weep upon in France at six years old  
To think of Scotland.

MARY STUART

Would I weep for that,  
Woman or child, I have had now years enough  
To weep in ; thou wast never French in heart,  
Serving the queen of France. Poor queen that was,  
Poor boy that played her bridegroom ! now they seem  
In these mine eyes that were her eyes as far  
Beyond the reach and range of oldworld time  
As their first fathers' graves.

*Enter* SIR AMYAS PAULET

PAULET

Madam, if now  
It please you to set forth, the hour is full,  
And there your horses ready.

MARY STUART

Sir, my thanks.  
We are bounden to you and this goodly day

For no small comfort. Is it your will we ride  
Accompanied with any for the nonce  
Of our own household?

PAULET

If you will, to-day  
Your secretaries have leave to ride with you.

## MARY STUART

We keep some state then yet. I pray you, sir,  
Doth he wait on you that came here last month,  
A low-built lank-cheeked Judas-bearded man,  
Lean, supple, grave, pock-pitten, yellow-polled,  
A smiling fellow with a downcast eye?

PAULET

Madam, I know the man for none of mine.

## MARY STUART

I give you joy as you should give God thanks,  
Sir, if I err not ; but meseemed this man  
Found gracious entertainment here, and took  
Such counsel with you as I surely thought  
Spake him your friend, and honourable ; but now  
If I misread not an ambiguous word  
It seems you know no more of him or less  
Than Peter did, being questioned, of his Lord.

PAULET

I know not where the cause were to be sought  
That might for likeness or unlikeness found

Make seemly way for such comparison  
As turns such names to jest and bitterness ;  
Howbeit, as I denied not nor disclaimed  
To know the man you speak of, yet I may  
With very purity of truth profess  
The man to be not of my following.

MARY STUART

See

How lightly may the tongue that thinks no ill  
Or trip or slip, discoursing that or this  
With grave good men in purity and truth,  
And come to shame even with a word ! God wot,  
We had need put bit and bridle in our lips  
Ere they take on them of their foolishness  
To change wise words with wisdom. Come, sweet  
friend,

Let us go seek our kind with horse and hound  
To keep us witless company ; belike,  
There shall we find our fellows.

*[Exeunt MARY STUART and MARY BEATON.]*

PAULET

Would to God

This day had done its office ! mine till then  
Holds me the verier prisoner.

*Enter PHILLIPPS*

PHILLIPPS

She will go ?

PAULET

Gladly, poor sinful fool ; more gladly, sir,  
Than I go with her.

PHILLIPPS

Yet you go not far ;  
She is come too near her end of wayfaring  
To tire much more men's feet that follow.

PAULET

Ay.

She walks but half blind yet to the end ; even now  
She spake of you, and questioned doubtfully  
What here you came to do, or held what place  
Or commerce with me : when you caught her eye,  
It seems your courtesy by some graceless chance  
Found but scant grace with her.

PHILLIPPS

'Tis mine own blame,  
Or fault of mine own feature ; yet forsooth  
I greatly covet not their gracious hap  
Who have found or find most grace with her.  
I pray,  
Doth Wade go with you ?

PAULET

Nay,—what, know you not ?—  
But with Sir Thomas Gorges, from the court,  
To drive this deer at Tixall.

PHILLIPPS

Two years since,  
He went, I think, commissioned from the queen  
To treat with her at Sheffield ?

PAULET

Ay, and since  
She hath not seen him ; who being known of here  
Had haply given her swift suspicion edge  
Or cause at least of wonder.

PHILLIPPS

And I doubt  
His last year's entertainment oversea  
As our queen's envoy to demand of France  
Her traitor Morgan's body, whence he brought  
Nought save dry blows back from the duke d'Aumale  
And for that prisoner's quarters here to hang  
His own not whole but beaten, should not much  
Incline him to more good regard of her  
For whose love's sake her friends have dealt with  
him  
So honourably, nor she that knows of this  
Be the less like to take his presence here  
For no good presage to her : you have both done  
well  
To keep his hand as close herein as mine.

PAULET

Sir, by my faith I know not, for myself,  
What part is for mine honour, or wherein  
Of all this action laid upon mine hand  
The name and witness of a gentleman



May gain desert or credit, and increase  
In seed and harvest of good men's esteem  
For heritage to his heirs, that men unborn  
Whose fame is as their name derived from his  
May reap in reputation ; and indeed  
I look for none advancement in the world  
Further than this that yet for no man's sake  
Would I forego, to keep the name I have  
And honour, which no son of mine shall say  
I have left him not for any deed of mine  
As perfect as my sire bequeathed it me :  
I say, for any word or work yet past  
No tongue can thus far tax me of decline  
From that fair forthright way of gentleman,  
Nor shall for any that I think to do  
Or ought I think to say alive : howbeit,  
I were much bounden to the man would say  
But so much for me in our mistress' ear,  
The treasurer's, or your master Walsingham's,  
Whose office here I have undergone thus long  
And had I leave more gladly would put off  
Than ever I put on me ; being not one  
That out of love toward England even or God  
At mightiest men's desire would lightly be  
For loyalty disloyal, or approved  
In trustless works a trusty traitor ; this  
He that should tell them of me, to procure  
The speedier end here of this work imposed,  
Should bind me to him more heartily than thanks  
Might answer.

PHILLIPPS

Good Sir Amyas, you and I  
Hold no such office in this dangerous time

As men make love to for their own name's sake  
Or personal lust of honour ; but herein  
I pray you yet take note, and pardon me  
If I for the instance mix your name with mine,  
That no man's private honour lies at gage,  
Nor is the stake set here to play for less  
Than what is more than all men's names alive,  
The great life's gage of England ; in whose name  
Lie all our own impledged, as all our lives  
For her redemption forfeit, if the cause  
Call once upon us ; not this gift or this,  
Or what best likes us or were gladliest given  
Or might most honourably be parted with  
For our more credit on her best behalf,  
Doth she we serve, this land that made us men,  
Require of all her children ; but demands  
Of our great duty toward her full deserts  
Even all we have of honour or of life,  
Of breath or fame to give her. What were I  
Or what were you, being mean or nobly born,  
Yet moulded both of one land's natural womb  
And fashioned out of England, to deny  
What gift she crave soever, choose and grudge  
What grace we list to give or what withhold,  
Refuse and reckon with her when she bids  
Yield up forsooth not life but fame to come,  
A good man's praise or gentleman's repute,  
Or lineal pride of children, and the light  
Of loyalty remembered ? which of these  
Were worth our mother's death, or shame that might  
Fall for one hour on England ? She must live  
And keep in all men's sight her honour fast  
Though all we die dishonoured ; and myself  
Know not nor seek of men's report to know

If what I do to serve her till I die  
Be honourable or shameful, and its end  
Good in men's eyes or evil ; but for God,  
I find not why the name or fear of him  
Herein should make me swerve or start aside  
Through faint heart's falsehood as a broken bow  
Snapped in his hand that bent it, ere the shaft  
Find out his enemies' heart, and I that end  
Whereto I am sped for service even of him  
Who put this office on us.

PAULET

Truly, sir,  
I lack the wordy wit to match with yours,  
Who speak no more than soldier ; this I know,  
I am sick in spirit and heart to have in hand  
Such work or such device of yours as yet  
For fear and conscience of what worst may come  
I dare not well bear through.

PHILLIPPS

Why, so last month  
You writ my master word and me to boot  
I had set you down a course for many things  
You durst not put in execution, nor  
Consign the packet to this lady's hand  
That was returned from mine, seeing all was well,  
And you should hold yourself most wretched man  
If by your mean or order there should spring  
Suspicion 'twixt the several messengers  
Whose hands unwitting each of other ply  
The same close trade for the same golden end,  
While either holds his mate a faithful fool

And all their souls, baseborn or gently bred,  
Are coined and stamped and minted for our use  
And current in our service ; I thereon  
To assuage your doubt and fortify your fear  
Was posted hither, where by craft and pains  
The web is wound up of our enterprise  
And in our hands we hold her very heart  
As fast as all this while we held impawned  
The faith of Barnes that stood for Gifford here  
To take what letters for his mistress came  
From southward through the ambassador of France  
And bear them to the brewer, your honest man,  
Who wist no further of his fellowship  
Than he of Gifford's, being as simple knaves  
As knavish each in his simplicity,  
And either serviceable alike, to shift  
Between my master's hands and yours and mine  
Her letters writ and answered to and fro ;  
And all these faiths as weathertight and safe  
As was the box that held those letters close  
At bottom of the barrel, to give up  
The charge there sealed and ciph<sup>e</sup>red, and receive  
A charge as great in peril and in price  
To yield again, when they drew off the beer  
That weekly served this lady's household whom  
We have drained as dry of secrets drugged with death  
As ever they this vessel, and return  
To her own lips the dregs she brewed or we  
For her to drink have tempered. What of this  
Should seem so strange now to you, or distaste  
So much the daintier palate of your thoughts,  
That I should need reiterate you by word  
The work of us o'erpast, or fill your ear  
With long foregone recital, that at last

Your soul may start not or your sense recoil  
To know what end we are come to, or what hope  
We took in hand to cut this peril off  
By what close mean soe'er and what foul hands  
Unwashed of treason, which it yet mislikes  
Your knightly palm to touch or close with, seeing  
The grime of gold is baser than of blood  
That barks their filthy fingers? yet with these  
Must you cross hands and grapple, or let fall  
The trust you took to treasure.

PAULET

Sir, I will,  
Even till the queen take back that gave it; yet  
Will not join hands with these, nor take on mine  
The taint of their contagion; knowing no cause  
That should confound or couple my good name  
With theirs more hateful than the reek of hell.  
You had these knaveries and these knaves in charge,  
Not I that knew not how to handle them  
Nor whom to choose for chief of treasons, him  
That in mine ignorant eye, unused to read  
The shameful scripture of such faces, bare  
Graved on his smooth and simple cheek and brow  
No token of a traitor; yet this boy,  
This milk-mouthed weanling with his maiden chin,  
This soft-lipped knave, late suckled as on blood  
And nursed of poisonous nipples, have you not  
Found false or feared by this, whom first you found  
A trustier thief and worthier of his wage  
Than I, poor man, had wit to find him? I,  
That trust no changelings of the church of hell,  
No babes reared priestlike at the paps of Rome,  
Who have left the old harlot's deadly dugs drawn dry,

I lacked the craft to rate this knave of price,  
Your smock-faced Gifford, at his worth aright,  
Which now comes short of promise.

PHILLIPPS

O, not he ;

Let not your knighthood for a slippery word  
So much misdoubt his knaveship ; here from France,  
On hint of our suspicion in his ear  
Half jestingly recorded, that his hand  
Were set against us in one politic track  
With his old yoke-fellows in craft and creed,  
Betraying not them to us but ourselves to them,  
My Gilbert writes me with such heat of hand  
Such piteous protestation of his faith  
So stuffed and swoln with burly-bellied oaths  
And God and Christ confound him if he lie  
And Jesus save him as he speaks mere truth,  
My gracious godly priestling, that yourself  
Must sure be moved to take his truth on trust  
Or stand for him approved an atheist.

PAULET

Well,

That you find stuff of laughter in such gear  
And mirth to make out of the godless mouth  
Of such a twice-turned villain, for my part  
I take in token of your certain trust,  
And make therewith mine own assurance sure,  
To see betimes an end of all such craft  
As takes the faith forsworn of loud-tongued liars  
And blasphemies of brothel-breathing knaves  
To build its hope or break its jest upon ;

And so commend you to your charge, and take  
Mine own on me less gladly ; for by this  
She should be girt to ride, as the old saw saith,  
Out of God's blessing into the warm sun  
And out of the warm sun into the pit  
That men have dug before her, as herself  
Had dug for England else a deeper grave  
To hide our hope for ever : yet I would  
This day and all that hang on it were done. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III. *Before Tixall Park*

MARY STUART, MARY BEATON, PAULET, CURLE,  
NAU, and *Attendants*

MARY STUART

If I should never more back steed alive  
But now had ridden hither this fair day  
The last road ever I must ride on earth,  
Yet would I praise it, saying of all days gone  
And all roads ridden in sight of stars and sun  
Since first I sprang to saddle, here at last  
I had found no joyless end. These ways are smooth,  
And all this land's face merry ; yet I find  
The ways even therefore not so good to ride,  
And all the land's face therefore less worth love,  
Being smoother for a palfrey's maiden pace  
And merrier than our moors for outlook ; nay,  
I lie to say so ; there the wind and sun  
Make madder mirth by midsummer, and fill  
With broader breath and lustier length of light

The heartier hours that clothe for even and dawn  
Our bosom-belted billowy-blossoming hills  
Whose hearts break out in laughter like the sea  
For miles of heaving heather. Ye should mock  
My banished praise of Scotland ; and in faith  
I praised it but to prick you on to praise  
Of your own goodly land ; though field and wood  
Be parked and parcelled to the sky's edge out,  
And this green Stafford moorland smooth and strait  
That we but now rode over, and by ours  
Look pale for lack of large live mountain bloom  
Wind-buffed with morning, it should be  
Worth praise of men whose lineal honour lives  
In keeping here of history : but meseems  
I have heard, Sir Amyas, of your liberal west  
As of a land more affluent-souled than this  
And fruitful-hearted as the south-wind ; here  
I find a fair-faced change of temperate clime  
From that bald hill-brow in a broad bare plain  
Where winter laid us both his prisoners late  
Fast by the feet at Tutbury ; but men say  
Your birthright in this land is fallen more fair  
In goodlier ground of heritage : perchance,  
Grief to be now barred thence by mean of me,  
Who less than you can help it or myself,  
Makes you ride sad and sullen.

PAULET

Madam, no ;

I pray you lay not to my wilful charge  
The blame or burden of discourtesy  
That but the time should bear which lays on me  
This weight of thoughts untimely.



MARY STUART

Nay, fair sir,

If I, that have no cause in life to seem  
Glad of my sad life more than prisoners may,  
Take comfort yet of sunshine, he methinks  
That holds in ward my days and nights might well  
Take no less pleasure of this broad blithe air  
Than his poor charge that too much troubles him.  
What, are we nigh the chase?

PAULET

Even hard at hand.

MARY STUART

Can I not see between the glittering leaves  
Gleam the dun hides and flash the startled horns  
That we must charge and scatter? Were I queen  
And had a crown to wager on my hand,  
Sir, I would set it on the chance to-day  
To shoot a flight beyond you.

PAULET

Verily,

The hazard were too heavy for my skill:  
I would not hold your wager.

MARY STUART

No! and why?

PAULET

For fear to come a bowshot short of you  
On the left hand, unluckily.

## MARY STUART

My friend,  
Our keeper's wit-shaft is too keen for ours  
To match its edge with pointless iron.—Sir,  
Your tongue shoots further than my hand or eye  
With sense or aim can follow.—Gilbert Curle,  
Your heart yet halts behind this cry of hounds,  
Hunting your own deer's trail at home, who lies  
Now close in covert till her bearing-time  
Be full to bring forth kindly fruit of kind  
To love that yet lacks issue ; and in sooth  
I blame you not to bid all sport go by  
For one white doe's sake travailing, who myself  
Think long till I may take within mine arm  
The soft fawn suckling that is yeaned not yet  
But is to make her mother. We must hold  
A goodly christening feast with prisoner's cheer  
And mirth enow for such a tender thing  
As will not weep more to be born in bonds  
Than babes born out of gaoler's ward, nor grudge  
To find no friend more fortunate than I  
Nor happier hand to welcome it, nor name  
More prosperous than poor mine to wear, if God  
Shall send the new-made mother's breast, for love  
Of us that love his mother's maidenhood,  
A maid to be my namechild, and in all  
Save love to them that love her, by God's grace,  
Most unlike me ; for whose unborn sweet sake  
Pray you meantime be merry.—'Faith, methinks  
Here be more huntsmen out afield to-day  
And merrier than my guardian. Sir, look up ;  
What think you of these riders?—All my friends,  
Make on to meet them.

PAULET

There shall need no haste ;  
They ride not slack or lamely.

MARY STUART

Now, fair sir,  
What say you to my chance on wager? here  
I think to outshoot your archery.—By my life,  
That too must fail if hope now fail me ; these  
That ride so far off yet, being come, shall bring  
Death or deliverance. Prithee, speak but once ;  
[*Aside to MARY BEATON.*

Say, these are they we looked for ; say, thou too  
Hadst hope to meet them ; say, they should be here,  
And I did well to look for them ; O God !  
Say but I was not mad to hope ; see there ;  
Speak, or I die.

MARY BEATON

Nay, not before they come.

MARY STUART

Dost thou not hear my heart ? it speaks so loud  
I can hear nothing of them. Yet I will not  
Fail in mine enemy's sight. This is mine hour  
That was to be for triumph ; God, I pray,  
Stretch not its length out longer !

MARY BEATON

It is past.

*Enter* SIR THOMAS GORGES, SIR WILLIAM WADE,  
and *Soldiers*

MARY STUART

What man is this that stands across our way?

GORGES

One that hath warrant, madam, from the queen  
To arrest your French and English secretary  
And for more surety see yourself removed  
To present ward at Tixall here hard by,  
As in this paper stands of her subscribed.  
Lay hands on them.

MARY STUART

Was this your riddle's word?

[*To* PAULET.

You have shot beyond me indeed, and shot to death  
Your honour with my life.—Draw, sirs, and stand;  
Ye have swords yet left to strike with once, and die  
By these our foes are girt with. Some good friend—  
I should have one yet left of you—take heart  
And slay me here. For God's love, draw; they  
have not

So large a vantage of us we must needs  
Bear back one foot from peril. Give not way;  
Ye shall but die more shamefully than here  
Who can but here die fighting. What, no man?  
Must I find never at my need alive  
A man with heart to help me? O, my God,  
Let me die now and foil them! Paulet, you,  
Most knightly liar and traitor, was not this  
Part of your charge, to play my hangman too,

Who have played so well my doomsman, and betrayed  
So honourably my trust, so bravely set  
A snare so loyal to make sure for death  
So poor a foolish woman? Sir, or you  
That have this gallant office, great as his,  
To do the deadliest errand and most vile  
That even your mistress ever laid on man  
And sent her basest knave to bear and slay,  
You are likewise of her chivalry, and should not  
Shrink to fulfil your title ; being a knight,  
For her dear sake that made you, lose not heart  
To strike for her one worthy stroke, that may  
Rid me defenceless of the loathed long life  
She gapes for like a bloodhound. Nay, I find  
A face beside you that should bear for me  
Not life inscribed upon it ; two years since  
I read therein at Sheffield what good will  
She bare toward me that sent to treat withal  
So mean a man and shameless, by his tongue  
To smite mine honour on the face, and turn  
My name of queen to servant ; by his hand  
So let her turn my life's name now to death,  
Which I would take more thankfully than shame  
To plead and thus prevail not.

PAULET

Madam, no,  
With us you may not in such suit prevail  
Nor we by words or wrath of yours be moved  
To turn their edge back on you, nor remit  
The least part of our office, which deserves  
Nor scorn of you nor wonder, whose own act  
Has laid it on us ; wherefore with less rage  
Please you take thought now to submit yourself,

Even for your own more honour, to the effect  
Whose cause was of your own device, that here  
Bears fruit unlooked for ; which being ripe in time  
You cannot choose but taste of, nor may we  
But do the season's bidding, and the queen's  
Who weeps at heart to know it.—Disarm these men ;  
Take you the prisoners to your present ward  
And hence again to London ; here meanwhile  
Some week or twain their lady must lie close  
And with a patient or impatient heart  
Expect an end and word of judgment : I  
Must with Sir William back to Chartley straight  
And there make inquisition ere day close  
What secret serpents of what treasons hatched  
May in this lady's papers lurk, whence we  
Must pluck the fangs forth of them yet unfleshed,  
And lay these plots like dead and strangled snakes  
Naked before the council.

MARY STUART

I must go ?

GORGES

Madam, no help ; I pray your pardon.

MARY STUART

Ay ?

Had I your pardon in this hand to give,  
And here in this my vengeance—Words, and words !  
God, for thy pity ! what vile thing is this  
That thou didst make of woman ? even in death  
As in the extremest evil of all our lives,  
We can but curse or pray, but prate and weep,

And all our wrath is wind that works no wreck,  
And all our fire as water. Noble sirs,  
We are servants of your servants, and obey  
The beck of your least groom ; obsequiously,  
We pray you but report of us so much,  
Submit us to you. Yet would I take farewell,  
May it not displease you, for old service' sake,  
Of one my servant here that was, and now  
Hath no word for me ; yet I blame him not,  
Who am past all help of man ; God witness me,  
I would not chide now, Gilbert, though my tongue  
Had strength yet left for chiding, and its edge  
Were yet a sword to smite with, or my wrath  
A thing that babes might shrink at ; only this  
Take with you for your poor queen's true last word,  
That if they let me live so long to see  
The fair wife's face again from whose soft side,  
Now labouring with your child, by violent hands  
You are reft perforce for my sake, while I live  
I will have charge of her more carefully  
Than of mine own life's keeping, which indeed  
I think not long to keep, nor care, God knows,  
How soon or how men take it. Nay, good friend,  
Weep not ; my weeping time is wellnigh past,  
And theirs whose eyes have too much wept for me  
Should last no longer. Sirs, I give you thanks  
For thus much grace and patience shown of you,  
My gentle gaolers, towards a queen unqueened  
Who shall nor get nor crave again of man  
What grace may rest in him to give her. Come,  
Bring me to bonds again, and her with me  
That hath not stood so nigh me all these years  
To fall ere life doth from my side, or take  
Her way to death without me till I die.

ACT II  
*WALSINGHAM*

SCENE I. *Windsor Castle*

QUEEN ELIZABETH *and* SIR FRANCIS WALSINGHAM

ELIZABETH

WHAT will ye make me? Let the council know  
I am yet their loving mistress, but they lay  
Too strange a burden on my love who send  
As to their servant word what ways to take,  
What sentence of my subjects given subscribe  
And in mine own name utter. Bid them wait ;  
Have I not patience? and was never quick  
To teach my tongue the deadly word of death,  
Lest one day strange tongues blot my fame with  
    blood ;  
The red addition of my sister's name  
Shall brand not mine.

WALSINGHAM

God grant your mercy shown  
Mark not your memory like a martyr's red  
With pure imperial heart's-blood of your own



Shed through your own sweet-spirited height of heart  
That held your hand from justice.

ELIZABETH

I would rather  
Stand in God's sight so signed with mine own blood  
Than with a sister's—innocent ; or indeed  
Though guilty—being a sister's—might I choose,  
As being a queen I may not surely—no—  
I may not choose, you tell me.

WALSINGHAM

Nay, no man  
Hath license of so large election given  
As once to choose, being servant called of God,  
If he will serve or no, or save the name  
And slack the service.

ELIZABETH

Yea, but in his Word  
I find no word that whets for king-killing  
The sword kings bear for justice ; yet I doubt,  
Being drawn, it may not choose but strike at root—  
Being drawn to cut off treason. Walsingham,  
You are more a statesman than a gospeller ;  
Take for your tongue's text now no text of God's,  
But what the devil has put into their lips  
Who should have slain me ; nay, what by God's grace,  
Who bared their purpose to us, through pain or fear  
Hath been wrung thence of secrets writ in fire  
At bottom of their hearts. Have they confessed ?

WALSINGHAM

The twain trapped first in London.

ELIZABETH

What, the priest ?  
Their twice-turned Ballard, ha ?

WALSINGHAM

Madam, not he.

ELIZABETH

God's blood ! ye have spared not him the torment,  
    knaves ?  
Of all I would not spare him.

WALSINGHAM

Verily, no ;  
The rack hath spun his life's thread out so fine  
There is but left for death to slit in twain  
The thickness of a spider's.

ELIZABETH

Ay, still dumb ?

WALSINGHAM

Dumb for all good the pains can get of him ;  
Had he drunk dry the chalice of his craft  
Brewed in design abhorred of even his friends  
With poisonous purpose toward your majesty,  
He had kept scarce harder silence.

## ELIZABETH

Poison ? ay—

That should be still the churchman's household sword  
Or saintly staff to bruise crowned heads from far  
And break them with his precious balms that smell  
Rank as the jaws of death, or festal fume  
When Rome yet reeked with Borgia ; but the rest  
Had grace enow to grant me for goodwill  
Some death more gracious than a rat's ? God wot,  
I am bounden to them, and will charge for this  
The hangman thank them heartily ; they shall not  
Lack daylight means to die by. God, meseems,  
Will have me not die darkling like a dog,  
Who hath kept my lips from poison and my heart  
From shot of English knave or Spanish, both  
Dubbed of the devil or damned his doctors, whom  
My riddance from all ills that plague man's life  
Should have made great in record ; and for wage  
Your Ballard hath not better hap to fee  
Than Lopez had or Parry. Well, he lies  
As dumb in bonds as those dead dogs in earth,  
You say, but of his fellows newly ta'en  
There are that keep not silence : what say these ?  
Pour in mine ears the poison of their plot  
Whose fangs have stung the silly snakes to death.

## WALSINGHAM

The first a soldier, Savage, in these wars  
That sometime serving sought a traitor's luck  
Under the prince Farnese, then of late  
At Rheims was tempted of our traitors there,  
Of one in chief, Gifford the seminarist,

My smock-faced spy's good uncle, to take off  
Or the earl of Leicester or your gracious self ;  
And since his passage hither, to confirm  
His hollow-hearted hardihood, hath had  
Word from this doctor more solicitous yet  
Sent by my knave his nephew, who of late  
Was in the seminary of so deadly seed  
Their reader in philosophy, that their head,  
Even Cardinal Allen, holds for just and good  
The purpose laid upon his hand ; this man  
Makes yet more large confession than of this,  
Saying from our Gilbert's trusty mouth he had  
Assurance that in Italy the Pope  
Hath levies raised against us, to set forth  
For seeming succour toward the Parmesan,  
But in their actual aim bent hither, where  
With French and Spaniards in one front of war  
They might make in upon us ; but from France  
No foot shall pass for inroad on our peace  
Till—so they phrase it—by these Catholics here  
Your majesty be taken, or——

## ELIZABETH

No more—

But only taken ? springed but bird-like ? Ha !  
They are something tender of our poor personal  
chance—

Temperately tender : yet I doubt the springe  
Had haply maimed me no less deep than life  
Sits next the heart most mortal. Or—so be it  
I slip the springe—what yet may shackle France,  
Hang weights upon their purpose who should else  
Be great of heart against us ? They take time

Till I be taken—or till what signal else  
As favourable?

WALSINGHAM

Till she they serve be brought  
Safe out of Paulet's keeping.

ELIZABETH

Ay? they know him  
So much my servant, and his guard so good,  
That sound of strange feet marching on our soil  
Against us in his prisoner's name perchance  
Might from the walls wherein she sits his guest  
Raise a funereal echo? Yet I think  
He would not dare—what think'st thou might he dare  
Without my word for warrant? If I knew  
This——

WALSINGHAM

It should profit not your grace to know  
What may not be conceivable for truth  
Without some stain on honour.

ELIZABETH

Nay, I say not  
That I would have him take upon his hand  
More than his trust may warrant: yet have men,  
Good men, for very truth of their good hearts  
Put loyal hand to work as perilous—well,  
God wot I would not have him so transgress—  
If such be called transgressors.

WALSINGHAM

Let the queen  
Rest well assured he shall not. So far forth  
Our swordsman Savage witnesses of these  
That moved him toward your murder but in trust  
Thereby to bring invasion over sea :  
Which one more gently natured of his birth,  
Tichborne, protests with very show of truth  
That he would give no ear to, knowing, he saith,  
The miseries of such conquest : nor, it seems,  
Heard this man aught of murderous purpose bent  
Against your highness.

ELIZABETH

Naught ? why then, again,  
To him I am yet more bounden, who may think,  
Being found but half my traitor, at my hands  
To find but half a hangman.

WALSINGHAM

Nay, the man  
Herein seems all but half his own man, being  
Made merely out of stranger hearts and brains  
Their engine of conspiracy ; for thus  
Forsooth he pleads, that Babington his friend  
First showed him how himself was wrought upon  
By one man's counsel and persuasion, one  
Held of great judgment, Ballard, on whose head  
All these lay all their forfeit.

ELIZABETH

Yet shall each  
Pay for himself red coin of ransom down

In costlier drops than gold is. But of these  
Why take we thought? their natural-subject blood  
Can wash not out their sanguine-sealed attempt,  
Nor leave us marked as tyrant: only she  
That is the head and heart of all your fears  
Whose hope or fear is England's, quick or dead,  
Leaves or imperilled or impeached of blood  
Me that with all but hazard of mine own,  
God knows, would yet redeem her. I will write  
With mine own hand to her privily,—what else?—  
Saying, if by word as privy from her hand  
She will confess her treasonous practices,  
They shall be wrapped in silence up, and she  
By judgment live unscathed.

## WALSINGHAM

Being that she is,  
So surely will she deem of your great grace,  
And see it but as a snare set wide, or net  
Spread in the bird's sight vainly.

## ELIZABETH

Why, then, well:  
She, casting off my grace, from all men's grace  
Cuts off herself, and even aloud avows  
By silence and suspect of jealous heart  
Her manifest foul conscience: on which proof  
I will proclaim her to the parliament  
So self-convicted. Yet I would not have  
Her name and life by mortal evidence  
Touched at the trial of them that now shall die  
Or by their charge attainted: lest myself  
Fall in more peril of her friends than she  
Stands yet in shot of judgment.

WALSINGHAM

Be assured,  
Madam, the process of their treasons judged  
Shall tax not her before her trial-time  
With public note of clear complicity  
Even for that danger's sake which moves you.

ELIZABETH

Me

So much it moves not for my mere life's sake  
Which I would never buy with fear of death  
As for the general danger's and the shame's  
Thence cast on queenship and on womanhood  
By mean of such a murderess. But, for them,  
I would the merited manner of their death  
Might for more note of terror be referred  
To me and to my council : these at least  
Shall hang for warning in the world's wide eye  
More high than common traitors, with more pains  
Being ravished forth of their more villainous lives  
Than feed the general throat of justice. Her  
Shall this too touch, whom none that serves hence-  
forth  
But shall be sure of hire more terrible  
Than all past wage of treason.

WALSINGHAM

Why, so far

As law gives leave——

ELIZABETH

What prat'st thou me of law?  
God's blood ! is law for man's sake made, or man



For law's sake only, to be held in bonds,  
Led lovingly like hound in huntsman's leash  
Or child by finger, not for help or stay,  
But hurt and hindrance? Is not all this land  
And all its hope and surety given to time  
Of sovereignty and freedom, all the fame  
And all the fruit of manhood hence to be,  
More than one rag or relic of its law  
Wherewith all these lie shackled? as too sure  
Have states no less than ours been done to death  
With gentle counsel and soft-handed rule  
For fear to snap one thread of ordinance  
Though thence the state were strangled.

WALSINGHAM

Madam, yet  
There need no need be here of law's least breach,  
That of all else is worst necessity—  
Being such a mortal medicine to the state  
As poison drunk to expel a feverish taint  
Which air or sleep might purge as easily.

ELIZABETH

Ay, but if air be poison-struck with plague  
Or sleep to death lie palsied, fools were they,  
Faint hearts and faithless, who for health's fair sake  
Should fear to cleanse air, pierce and probe the  
trance,  
With purging fire or iron. Have your way.  
God send good end of all this, and procure  
Some mean whereby mine enemies' craft and his  
May take no feet but theirs in their own toils,  
And no blood shed be innocent as mine.

SCENE II. *Chartley*MARY BEATON *and* SIR AMYAS PAULET

PAULET

You should do well to bid her less be moved  
Who needs fear less of evil. Since we came  
Again from Tixall this wild mood of hers  
Hath vexed her more than all men's enmities  
Should move a heart more constant. Verily,  
I thought she had held more rule upon herself  
Than to call out on beggars at the gate  
When she rode forth, crying she had nought to give,  
Being all as much a beggar too as they,  
With all things taken from her.

MARY BEATON

Being so served,  
In sooth she should not show nor shame nor spleen :  
It was but seventeen days ye held her there  
Away from all attendance, as in bonds  
Kept without change of raiment, and to find,  
Being thence haled hither again, no nobler use,  
But all her papers plundered—then her keys  
By force of violent threat wrung from the hand  
She scarce could stir to help herself abed :  
These were no matters that should move her.

PAULET

None,

If she be clean of conscience, whole of heart,  
Nor else than pure in purpose, but maligned

Of men's suspicions : how should one thus wronged  
But hold all hard chance good to approve her case  
Blameless, give praise for all, turn all to thanks  
That might unload her of so sore a charge,  
Despoiled not, but disburdened ? Her great wrath  
Pleads hard against her, and itself spake loud  
Alone, ere other witness might unseal  
Wrath's fierce interpretation : which ere long  
Was of her secretaries expounded.

MARY BEATON

Sir,

As you are honourable, and of equal heart  
Have shown such grace as man being manful may  
To such a piteous prisoner as desires  
Nought now but what may hurt not loyalty  
Though you comply therewith to comfort her,  
Let her not think your spirit so far incensed  
By wild words of her mistress cast on you  
In heat of heart and bitter fire of spleen  
That you should now close ears against a prayer  
Which else might fairly find them open.

PAULET

Speak

More short and plainly : what I well may grant  
Shall so seem easiest granted.

MARY BEATON

There should be

No cause I think to seal your lips up, though  
I crave of them but so much breath as may  
Give mine ear knowledge of the witness borne

(If aught of witness were against her borne)  
By those her secretaries you spake of.

PAULET

This

With hard expostulation was drawn forth  
At last of one and other, that they twain  
Had writ by record from their lady's mouth  
To Babington some letter which implies  
Close conscience of his treason, and goodwill  
To meet his service with complicity :  
But one thing found therein of deadliest note  
The Frenchman swore they set not down, nor she  
Bade write one word of favour nor assent  
Answering this murderous motion toward our queen :  
Only, saith he, she held herself not bound  
For love's sake to reveal it, and thereby  
For love of enemies do to death such friends  
As only for her own love's sake were found  
Fit men for murderous treason : and so much  
Her own hand's transcript of the word she sent  
Should once produced bear witness of her.

MARY BEATON

Ay?

How then came this withholden?

PAULET

If she speak

But truth, why, truth should sure be manifest,  
And shall, with God's good will, to good men's joy  
That wish not evil : as at Fotheringay  
When she shall come to trial must be tried  
If it be truth or no : for which assay

You shall do toward her well and faithfully  
To bid her presently prepare her soul  
That it may there make answer.

MARY BEATON

Presently?

PAULET

Upon the arraignment of her friends who stand  
As 'twere at point of execution now  
Ere sentence pass upon them of their sin.  
Would you no more with me?

MARY BEATON

I am bounden to you  
For thus much tidings granted.

PAULET

So farewell. [*Exit.*]

MARY BEATON

So fare I well or ill as one who knows  
He shall not fare much further toward his end.  
Here looms on me the landmark of my life  
That I have looked for now some score of years  
Even with long-suffering eagerness of heart  
And a most hungry patience. I did know,  
Yea, God, thou knowest I knew this all that while,  
From that day forth when even these eyes beheld  
Fall the most faithful head in all the world,  
Toward her most loving and of me most loved,  
By doom of hers that was so loved of him  
He could not love me nor his life at all

Nor his own soul nor aught that all men love,  
Nor could fear death nor very God, or care  
If there were aught more merciful in heaven  
Than love on earth had been to him. Chastelard !  
I have not had the name upon my lips  
That stands for sign of love the truest in man  
Since first love made him sacrifice of men,  
This long sad score of years retributive  
Since it was cast out of her heart and mind  
Who made it mean a dead thing ; nor, I think,  
Will she remember it before she die  
More than in France the memories of old friends  
Are like to have yet forgotten ; but for me,  
Haply thou knowest, so death not all be death,  
If all these years I have had not in my mind  
Through all these chances this one thought in all,  
That I shall never leave her till she die.  
Nor surely now shall I much longer serve  
Who fain would lie down at her foot and sleep,  
Fain, fain have done with waking. Yet my soul  
Knows, and yet God knows, I would set not hand  
To such a work as might put on the time  
And make death's foot more forward for her sake :  
Yea, were it to deliver mine own soul  
From bondage and long-suffering of my life,  
I would not set mine hand to work her wrong.  
Tempted I was—but hath God need of me  
To work his judgment, bring his time about,  
Approve his justice if the word be just  
That whoso doeth shall suffer his own deed,  
Bear his own blow, to weep tears back for tears,  
And bleed for bloodshed ? God should spare me this  
That once I held the one good hope on earth,  
To be the mean and engine of her end

Or some least part at least therein : I prayed,  
God, give me so much grace—who now should pray,  
Tempt me not, God. My heart swelled once to know  
I bore her death about me ; as I think  
Indeed I bear it : but what need hath God  
That I should clench his doom with craft of mine ?  
What needs the wrath of hot Elizabeth  
Be blown aflame with mere past writing read,  
Which hath to enkindle it higher already proof  
Of present practice on her state and life ?  
Shall fear of death or love of England fail  
Or memory faint or foresight fall stark blind,  
That there should need the whet and spur of shame  
To turn her spirit into some chafing snake's  
And make its fang more feared for mortal ? Yet  
I am glad, and I repent me not, to know  
I have the writing in my bosom sealed  
That bears such matter with her own hand signed  
As she that yet repents her not to have writ  
Repents her not that she refrained to send  
And fears not but long since it felt the fire—  
Being fire itself to burn her, yet unquenched,  
But in my hand here covered harmless up  
Which had in charge to burn it. What perchance  
Might then the reading of it have wrought for us,  
If all this fiery poison of her scoffs  
Making the foul froth of a serpent's tongue  
More venomous, and more deadly toward her queen  
Even Bess of Hardwick's bitterest babbling tales,  
Had touched at heart the Tudor vein indeed ?  
Enough it yet were surely, though that vein  
Were now the gentlest that such hearts may hold  
And all doubt's trembling balance that way bent,  
To turn as with one mortal grain cast in

The scale of grace against her life that writ  
And weigh down pity deathward.

*Enter* MARY STUART

MARY STUART

Have we found  
Such kindness of our keeper as may give  
Some ease from expectation ? or must hope  
Still fret for ignorance how long here we stay  
As men abiding judgment ?

MARY BEATON

Now not long,  
He tells me, need we think to tarry ; since  
The time and place of trial are set, next month  
To hold it in the castle of Fotheringay.

MARY STUART

Why, he knows well I were full easily moved  
To set forth hence ; there must I find more scope  
To commune with the ambassador of France  
By letter thence to London : but, God help,  
Think these folk truly, doth she verily think,  
What never man durst yet nor woman dreamed,  
May one that is nor man nor woman think,  
To bring a queen born subject of no laws  
Here in subjection of an alien law  
By foreign force of judgment ? Were she wise,  
Might she not have me privily made away ?  
And being nor wise nor valiant but of tongue,  
Could she find yet foolhardiness of heart



Enough to attain the rule of royal rights  
With murderous madness? I will think not this  
Till it be proven indeed.

MARY BEATON

A month come round,  
This man protests, will prove it.

MARY STUART

Ay! protests?  
What protestation of what Protestant  
Can unmake law that was of God's mouth made,  
Unwrite the writing of the world, unsay  
The general saying of ages? If I go,  
Compelled of God's hand or constrained of man's,  
Yet God shall bid me not nor man enforce  
My tongue to plead before them for my life.  
I had rather end as kings before me, die  
Rather by shot or stroke of murderous hands,  
Than so make answer once in face of man  
As one brought forth to judgment. Are they mad,  
And she most mad for envious heart of all,  
To make so mean account of me? Methought,  
When late we came back hither soiled and spent  
And sick with travel, I had seen their worst of wrong  
Full-faced, with its most outrage: when I found  
My servant Curle's young new-delivered wife  
Without priest's comfort and her babe unblessed  
A nameless piteous thing born ere its time,  
And took it from the mother's arms abed  
And bade her have good comfort, since myself  
Would take all charge against her husband laid

On mine own head to answer ; deeming not  
Man ever durst bid answer for myself  
On charge as mortal ; and mine almoner gone,  
Did I not crave of Paulet for a grace  
His chaplain might baptize me this poor babe,  
And was denied it, and with mine own hands  
For shame and charity moved to christen her  
There with scant ritual in his heretic sight  
By mine own woful name, whence God, I pray,  
For her take off its presage ? I misdeemed,  
Who deemed all these and yet far more than these  
For one born queen indignities enough,  
On one crowned head enough of buffets : more  
Hath time's hand laid upon me : yet I keep  
Faith in one word I spake to Paulet, saying  
Two things were mine though I stood spoiled of all  
As of my letters and my privy coin  
By pickpurse hands of office : these things yet  
Might none take thievish hold upon to strip  
His prisoner naked of her natural dower,  
The blood yet royal running here unspilled  
And that religion which I think to keep  
Fast as this royal blood until I die.  
So where at last and howsoe'er I fare  
I need not much take thought, nor thou for love  
Take of thy mistress pity ; yet meseems  
They dare not work their open will on me :  
But God's it is that shall be done, and I  
Find end of all in quiet. I would sleep  
On this strange news of thine, that being awake  
I may the freshlier front my sense thereof  
And thought of life or death. Come in with me.

SCENE III. *Tyburn**A Crowd of Citizens*

## FIRST CITIZEN

Is not their hour yet on? Men say the queen  
Bade spare no jot of torment in their end  
That law might lay upon them.

## SECOND CITIZEN

Truth it is,  
To spare what scourge soe'er man's justice may  
Twist for such caitiff traitors were to grieve  
God's with mere inobservance. Hear you not  
How yet the loud lewd braggarts of their side  
Keep heart to threaten that for all this foil  
They are not foiled indeed, but yet the work  
Shall prosper with deliverance of their queen  
And death for her of ours, though they should give  
Of their own lives for one an hundredfold?

## THIRD CITIZEN

These are bold mouths; one that shall die to-day,  
Being this last week arraigned at Westminster,  
Had no such heart, they say, to his defence,  
Who was the main head of their treasons.

## FIRST CITIZEN

Ay,

And yesterday, if truth belie not him,  
Durst with his doomed hand write some word of  
prayer  
To the queen's self, her very grace, to crave

Grace of her for his gracelessness, that she  
Might work on one too tainted to deserve  
A miracle of compassion, whence her fame  
For pity of sins too great for pity of man  
Might shine more glorious than his crime showed foul  
In the eye of such a mercy.

## SECOND CITIZEN

Yet men said

He spake at his arraignment soberly  
With clear mild looks and gracious gesture, showing  
The purport of his treasons in such wise  
That it seemed pity of him to hear them, how  
All their beginnings and proceedings had  
First head and fountain only for their spring  
From ill persuasions of that poisonous priest  
Who stood the guiltiest near, by this man's side  
Approved a valiant villain. Barnwell next,  
Who came but late from Ireland here to court,  
Made simply protestation of design  
To work no personal ill against the queen  
Nor paint rebellion's face as murder's red  
With blood imperial : Tichborne then avowed  
He knew the secret of their aim, and kept,  
And held forsooth himself no traitor ; yet  
In the end would even plead guilty, Donne with him,  
And Salisbury, who not less professed he still  
Stood out against the killing of the queen,  
And would not hurt her for a kingdom : so,  
When thus all these had pleaded, one by one  
Was each man bid say fairly, for his part,  
Why sentence should not pass : and Ballard first,  
Who had been so sorely racked he might not stand,

Spake, but as seems to none effect : of whom  
Said Babington again, he set them on,  
He first, and most of all him, who believed  
This priest had power to assoil his soul alive  
Of all else mortal treason : Ballard then,  
As in sad scorn—*Yea, Master Babington,*  
*Quoth he, lay all upon me, but I wish*  
*For you the shedding of my blood might be*  
*The saving of your life : howbeit, for that,*  
*Say what you will ; and I will say no more.*  
Nor spake the swordsman Savage aught again,  
Who, first arraigned, had first avowed his cause  
Guilty : nor yet spake Tichborne aught : but Donne  
Spake, and the same said Barnwell, each had sinned  
For very conscience only : Salisbury last  
Besought the queen remission of his guilt.  
Then spake Sir Christopher Hatton for the rest  
That sat with him commissioners, and showed  
How by dark doctrine of the seminaries  
And instance most of Ballard had been brought  
To extreme destruction here of body and soul  
A sort of brave youths otherwise endowed  
With goodly gifts of birthright : and in fine  
There was the sentence given that here even now  
Shows seven for dead men in our present sight  
And shall bring six to-morrow forth to die.

*Enter BABINGTON, BALLARD (carried in a chair),  
TICHBORNE, SAVAGE, BARNWELL, TILNEY, and  
ABINGTON, guarded : Sheriff, Executioner, Chap-  
lain, &c.*

FIRST CITIZEN

What, will they speak ?

## SECOND CITIZEN

Ay ; each hath leave in turn  
To show what mood he dies in toward his cause.

## BALLARD

Sirs, ye that stand to see us take our doom,  
I being here given this grace to speak to you  
Have but my word to witness for my soul,  
That all I have done and all designed to do  
Was only for advancement of true faith  
To furtherance of religion : for myself  
Aught would I never, but for Christ's dear church  
Was mine intent all wholly, to redeem  
Her sore affliction in this age and land,  
As now may not be yet : which knowing for truth,  
I am readier even at heart to die than live.  
And dying I crave of all men pardon whom  
My doings at all have touched, or who thereat  
Take scandal ; and forgiveness of the queen  
If on this cause I have offended her.

## SAVAGE

The like say I, that have no skill in speech,  
But heart enough with faith at heart to die,  
Seeing but for conscience and the common good,  
And no preferment but this general weal,  
I did attempt this business.

## BARNWELL

I confess  
That I, whose seed was of that hallowed earth

Whereof each pore hath sweated blood for Christ,  
Had note of these men's drifts, which I deny  
That ever I consented with or could  
In conscience hold for lawful. That I came  
To spy for them occasions in the court  
And there being noted of her majesty  
She seeing mine eyes peer sharply like a man's  
That had such purpose as she wist before  
Prayed God that all were well—if this were urged,  
I might make answer, it was not unknown  
To divers of the council that I there  
Had matters to solicit of mine own  
Which thither drew me then : yet I confess  
That Babington, espying me thence returned,  
Asked me what news : to whom again I told,  
Her majesty had been abroad that day,  
With all the circumstance I saw there. Now  
If I have done her majesty offence  
I crave her pardon : and assuredly  
If this my body's sacrifice might yet  
Establish her in true religion, here  
Most willingly should this be offered up.

## TILNEY

I came not here to reason of my faith,  
But to die simply like a Catholic, praying  
Christ give our queen Elizabeth long life,  
And warning all youth born take heed by me.

## ABINGTON

I likewise, and if aught I have erred in aught  
I crave but pardon as for ignorant sin,

Holding at all points firm the Catholic faith ;  
And all things charged against me I confess,  
Save that I ever sought her highness' death :  
In whose poor kingdom yet ere long I fear  
Will be great bloodshed.

## SHERIFF

Seest thou, Abington,  
Here all these people present of thy kind  
Whose blood shall be demanded at thy hands  
If dying thou hide what might endanger them ?  
Speak therefore, why or by what mortal mean  
Should there be shed such blood ?

## ABINGTON

All that I know  
You have on record : take but this for sure,  
This country lives for its iniquity  
Loathed of all countries, and God loves it not.  
Whereon I pray you trouble me no more  
With questions of this world, but let me pray  
And in mine own wise make my peace with God.

## BABINGTON

For me, first head of all this enterprise,  
I needs must make this record of myself,  
I have not conspired for profit, but in trust  
Of men's persuasions whence I stood assured  
This work was lawful which I should have done  
And meritorious as toward God ; for which  
No less I crave forgiveness of my queen  
And that my brother may possess my lands  
In heritage else forfeit with my head.



## TICHBORNE

Good countrymen and my dear friends, you look  
For something to be said of me, that am  
But an ill orator ; and my text is worse.  
Vain were it to make full discourse of all  
This cause that brings me hither, which before  
Was all made bare, and is well known to most  
That have their eyes upon me : let me stand  
For all young men, and most for those born high,  
Their present warning here : a friend I had,  
Ay, and a dear friend, one of whom I made  
No small account, whose friendship for pure love  
To this hath brought me : I may not deny  
He told me all the matter, how set down,  
And ready to be wrought ; which always I  
Held impious, and denied to deal therein :  
But only for my friend's regard was I  
Silent, and verified a saying in me,  
Who so consented to him. Ere this thing chanced,  
How brotherly we twain lived heart in heart  
Together, in what flourishing estate,  
This town well knows : of whom went all report  
Through her loud length of Fleetstreet and the  
Strand  
And all parts else that sound men's fortunate names,  
But Babington and Tichborne ? that therein  
There was no haughtiest threshold found of force  
To brave our entry ; thus we lived our life,  
And wanted nothing we might wish for : then,  
For me, what less was in my head, God knows,  
Than high state matters ? Give me now but leave  
Scarce to declare the miseries I sustained  
Since I took knowledge of this action, whence

To his estate I well may liken mine,  
Who could forbear not one forbidden thing  
To enjoy all else afforded of the world :  
The terror of my conscience hung on me ;  
Who, taking heed what perils girt me, went  
To Sir John Peters hence in Essex, there  
Appointing that my horses by his mean  
Should meet me here in London, whence I thought  
To flee into the country : but being here  
I heard how all was now bewrayed abroad :  
Whence Adam-like we fled into the woods  
And there were taken. My dear countrymen,  
Albeit my sorrows well may be your joy,  
Yet mix your smiles with tears : pity my case,  
Who, born out of an house whose name descends  
Even from two hundred years ere English earth  
Felt Norman heel upon her, were it yet  
Till this mishap of mine unspotted. Sirs,  
I have a wife, and one sweet child : my wife,  
My dear wife Agnes : and my grief is there ;  
And for six sisters too left on my hand :  
All my poor servants were dispersed, I know,  
Upon their master's capture : all which things  
Most heartily I sorrow for : and though  
Nought might I less have merited at her hands,  
Yet had I looked for pardon of my fault  
From the queen's absolute grace and clemency ;  
That the unexpired remainder of my years  
Might in some sort have haply recompensed  
This former guilt of mine whereof I die :  
But seeing such fault may find not such release  
Even of her utter mercies, heartily  
I crave at least of her and all the world  
Forgiveness, and to God commend my soul,

And to men's memory this my penitence  
Till our death's record die from out the land.

## FIRST CITIZEN

God pardon him! Stand back: what ail these  
knaves

To drive and thrust upon us? Help me, sir;  
I thank you: hence we take them full in view:  
Hath yet the hangman there his knife in hand?

## ACT III

### BURGHLEY

SCENE I. *The presence-chamber in Fotheringay Castle.*

*At the upper end, a chair of state as for QUEEN ELIZABETH ; opposite, in the centre of the hall, a chair for MARY STUART. The Commissioners seated on either side along the wall: to the right, the Earls, with LORD CHANCELLOR BROMLEY and LORD TREASURER BURGHLEY ; to the left, the Barons, with the Knights of the Privy Council, among them WALSINGHAM and PAULET ; POPHAM, EGERTON, and GAWDY, as Counsel for the Crown. Enter MARY STUART, supported by SIR ANDREW MELVILLE, and takes her place.*

MARY STUART

HERE are full many men of counsel met ;  
Not one for me. *[The Chancellor rises.]*

BROMLEY

Madam, this court is held  
To make strait inquisition as by law  
Of what with grief of heart our queen has heard,  
A plot upon her life, against the faith  
Here in her kingdom stablished : on which cause

Our charge it is to exact your answer here  
And put to proof your guilt or innocence.

MARY STUART (*rising*)

Sirs, whom by strange constraint I stand before,  
My lords, and not my judges, since no law  
Can hold to mortal judgment answerable  
A princess free-born of all courts on earth,  
I rise not here to make response as one  
Responsible toward any for my life  
Or of mine acts accountable to man,  
Who see none higher save only God in heaven :  
I am no natural subject of your land  
That I should here plead as a criminal charged,  
Nor in such wise appear I now : I came  
On your queen's faith to seek in England help  
By trothplight pledged me : where by promise-breach  
I am even since then her prisoner held in ward :  
Yet, understanding by report of you  
Some certain things I know not of to be  
Against me brought on record, by my will  
I stand content to hear and answer these.

BROMLEY

Madam, there lives none born on earth so high  
Who for this land's laws' breach within this land  
Shall not stand answerable before those laws.

BURGHLEY

Let there be record of the prisoner's plea  
And answer given such protest here set down,  
And so proceed we to this present charge.

## GAWDY

My lords, to unfold by length of circumstance  
The model of this whole conspiracy  
Should lay the pattern of all treasons bare  
That ever brought high state in danger : this  
No man there lives among us but hath heard,  
How certain men of our queen's household folk  
Being wrought on by persuasion of their priests  
Drew late a bond between them, binding these  
With others of their faith accomplices  
Directed first of Anthony Babington  
By mean of six for execution chosen  
To slay the queen their mistress, and thereon  
Make all her trustiest men of trust away ;  
As my lord treasurer Burghley present here,  
Lord Hunsdon, and Sir Francis Walsingham,  
And one that held in charge awhile agoe  
This lady now on trial, Sir Francis Knowles.  
That she was hereto privy, to her power  
Approving and abetting their device,  
It shall not stand us in much need to show  
Whose proofs are manifoldly manifest  
On record written of their hands and hers.

## MARY STUART

Of all this I know nothing : Babington  
I have used for mine intelligencer, sent  
With letters charged at need, but never yet  
Spake with him, never writ him word of mine  
As privy to these close conspiracies  
Nor word of his had from him. Never came  
One harmful thought upon me toward your queen,

Nor knowledge ever that of other hearts  
Was harm designed against her. Proofs, ye say,  
Forsooth ye hold to impeach me : I desire  
But only to behold and handle them  
If they in sooth of sense be tangible  
More than mere air and shadow.

BURGHLEY

Let the clerk  
Produce those letters writ from Babington.

MARY STUART

What then? it may be such were writ of him :  
Be it proved that they came ever in my hands.  
If Babington affirm so much, I say  
He, or who else will say it, lies openly.

GAWDY

Here is the man's confession writ, and here  
Ballard's the Jesuit, and the soldier's here,  
Savage, that served with Parma.

MARY STUART

What of these?  
Traitors they were, and traitor-like they lied.

GAWDY

And here the last her letter of response  
Confirming and approving in each point  
Their purpose, writ direct to Babington.

## MARY STUART

My letter? none of mine it is : perchance  
It may be in my cipher charactered,  
But never came from or my tongue or hand :  
I have sought mine own deliverance, and thereto  
Solicited of my friends their natural help :  
Yet certain whom I list not name there were,  
Whose offers made of help to set me free  
Receiving, yet I answered not a word.  
Howbeit, desiring to divert the storm  
Of persecution from the church, for this  
To your queen's grace I have made most earnest  
suit :

But for mine own part I would purchase not  
This kingdom with the meanest one man's death  
In all its commonalty, much less the queen's.  
Many there be have dangerously designed  
Things that I knew not : yea, but very late  
There came a letter to my hand which craved  
My pardon if by enterprise of some  
Were undertaken aught unknown of me :  
A cipher lightly may one counterfeit,  
As he that vaunted him of late in France  
To be my son's base brother : and I fear  
Lest this, for aught mine ignorance of it knows,  
May be that secretary's fair handiwork  
Who sits to judge me, and hath practised late,  
I hear, against my son's life and mine own.  
But I protest I have not so much as thought  
Nor dreamed upon destruction of the queen :  
I had rather spend most gladly mine own life  
Than for my sake the Catholics should be thus  
Afflicted only in very hate of me



And drawn to death so cruel as these tears  
Gush newly forth to think of.

BURGHLEY

Here no man  
Who hath showed himself true subject to the state  
Was ever for religion done to death :  
But some for treason, that against the queen  
Upheld the pope's bull and authority.

MARY STUART

Yet have I heard it otherwise affirmed  
And read in books set forth in print as much.

BURGHLEY

They that so write say too the queen hath here  
Made forfeit of her royal dignity.

WALSINGHAM

Here I call God to record on my part  
That personally or as a private man  
I have done nought misbeseeming honesty,  
Nor as I bear a public person's place  
Done aught thereof unworthy. I confess  
That, being right careful of the queen's estate  
And safety of this realm, I have curiously  
Searched out the practices against it : nay,  
Herein had Ballard offered me his help,  
I durst not have denied him ; yea, I would  
Have recompensed the pains he had taken. Say  
I have practised aught with him, why did he not,  
To save his life, reveal it ?

MARY STUART

Pray you, sir,  
Take no displeasure at me : truth it is  
Report has found me of your dealings, blown  
From lip to ear abroad, wherein myself  
I put no credit : and could but desire  
Yourself would all as little make account  
Of slanders flung on me. Spies, sure, are men  
Of doubtful credit, which dissemble things  
Far other than they speak. Do not believe  
That I gave ever or could give consent  
Once to the queen's destruction : I would never,  
These tears are bitter witness, never would  
Make shipwreck of my soul by compassing  
Destruction of my dearest sister.

GAWDY

This

Shall soon by witness be disproved : as here  
Even by this letter from Charles Paget's hand  
Transcribed, which Curle your secretary hath borne  
Plain witness you received, touching a league  
Betwixt Mendoza and Ballard, who conferred  
Of this land's foreordained invasion, thence  
To give you freedom.

MARY STUART

What of this ? ye shoot  
Wide of the purpose : this approves not me  
Consenting to the queen's destruction.

GAWDY

That  
Stands proven enough by word of Babington  
Who dying avowed it, and by letters passed  
From him to you, whom he therein acclaims  
As his most dread and sovereign lady and queen,  
And by the way makes mention passingly  
Of a plot laid by transference to convey  
This kingdom to the Spaniard.

MARY STUART

I confess  
There came a priest unto me, saying if I  
Would not herein bear part I with my son  
Alike should be debarred the inheritance :  
His name ye shall not have of me : but this  
Ye know, that openly the Spaniard lays  
Claim to your kingdom, and to none will give  
Place ever save to me.

BURGHLEY

Still stands the charge  
On written witness of your secretaries  
Great on all points against you.

MARY STUART

Wherefore then  
Are not these writers with these writings brought  
To outface me front to front ? For Gilbert Curle,  
He is in the Frenchman's hands a waxen toy,  
Whom the other, once mine uncle's secretary,  
The cardinal's of Lorraine, at his mere will

Moulds, turns, and tempers : being himself a knave  
That may be hired or scared with peril or coin  
To swear what thing men bid him. Truth again  
Is this that I deny not, seeing myself  
Against all right held fast in English ward,  
I have sought all help where I might hope to find :  
Which thing that I dispute not, let this be  
The sign that I disclaim no jot of truth  
In all objected to me. For the rest,  
All majesty that moves in all the world  
And all safe station of all princes born  
Fall, as things unrespected, to the ground,  
If on the testimony of secretaries  
And on their writings merely these depend,  
Being to their likeness thence debased : for me,  
Nought I delivered to them but what first  
Nature to me delivered, that I might  
Recover yet at length my liberty.  
I am not to be convicted save alone  
By mine own word or writing. If these men  
Have written toward the queen my sister's hurt  
Aught, I wist nought of all such writ at all :  
Let them be put to punishment : I am sure,  
Were these here present, they by testimony  
Would bring me clear of blame.

GAWDY

Yet by their mean

They could not in excuse of you deny  
That letters of communion to and fro  
Have passed between you and the Spaniard, whence  
What should have come on England and the queen  
These both well know, and with what messages

Were English exiles entertained of you  
By mean of these men, of your secretaries,  
Confirmed and cherished in conspiracy  
For this her kingdom's overthrow : in France  
Paget and Morgan, traitors in design  
Of one close mind with you, and in your name  
Cheered hence for constant service.

## MARY STUART

That I sought  
Comfort and furtherance of all Catholic states  
By what mean found soever just and good,  
Your mistress from myself had note long since  
And open warning : uncompelled I made  
Avowal of such my righteous purpose, nor  
In aught may disavow it. Of these late plots  
No proof is here to attaint mine innocence,  
Who dare all proof against me : Babington  
I know not of, nor Ballard, nor their works,  
But kings my kinsmen, powers that serve the church,  
These I confess my comforters, in hope  
Held fast of their alliance. Yet again  
I challenge in the witness of my words  
The notes writ of these letters here alleged  
In mine own hand : if these ye bring not forth,  
Judge all good men if I be not condemned  
In all your hearts already, who perchance  
For all this pageant held of lawless law  
Have bound yourselves by pledge to speak me dead :  
But I would have you look into your souls,  
Remembering how the theatre of the world  
Is wider, in whose eye ye are judged that judge,  
Than this one realm of England.

BURGHLEY

Toward that realm  
Suffice it here that, madam, you stand charged  
With deadly purpose : being of proven intent  
To have your son conveyed to Spain, and give  
The title you pretend upon our crown  
Up with his wardship to King Philip.

MARY STUART

Nay,  
I have no kingdom left to assign, nor crown  
Whereof to make conveyance : yet is this  
But lawful, that of all things which are mine  
I may dispose at pleasure, and to none  
Stand on such count accountable.

BURGHLEY

So be it  
So far as may be : but your ciphers sent  
By Curle's plain testimony to Babington,  
To the lord Lodovic, and to Fernihurst,  
Once provost on your part in Edinburgh  
By mean of Grange your friend his father-in-law,  
Speak not but as with tongue imperial, nor  
Of import less than kingdoms.

MARY STUART

Surely, sir,  
Such have I writ, and many ; nor therein  
Beyond my birth have trespassed, to commend  
That lord you speak of, and another, both  
My friends in faith, to a cardinal's dignity,  
And that, I trust, without offence : except

It be not held as lawful on my part  
To commune with the chiefest of my creed  
By written word on matters of mine own  
As for your queen with churchfolk of her kind.

## BURGHLEY

Well were it, madam, that with some of yours  
You had held less close communion : since by proof  
Reiterated from those your secretaries  
It seems you know right well that Morgan, who  
Sent Parry privily to despatch the queen,  
And have assigned him annual pension.

## MARY STUART

This

I know not, whether or no your charge be truth,  
But I do know this Morgan hath lost all  
For my sake, and in honour sure I am  
That rather to relieve him I stand bound  
Than to revenge an injury done your queen  
By one that lives my friend, and hath deserved  
Well at mine hands : yet, being not bound to this,  
I did affright the man from such attempts  
Of crimes against her, who contrariwise  
Hath out of England openly assigned  
Pensions to Gray my traitor, and the Scots  
Mine adversaries, as also to my son,  
To hire him to forsake me.

## BURGHLEY

Nay, but seeing  
By negligence of them that steered the state  
The revenues of Scotland sore impaired

Somewhat in bounty did her grace bestow  
Upon your son the king, her kinsman : whom  
She would not, being to her so near of blood,  
Forget from charity. No such help it was  
Nor no such honest service that your friends  
Designed you, who by letters hither writ  
To Paget and Mendoza sent as here  
Large proffers of strange aid from oversea  
To right you by her ruin.

## MARY STUART

Here was nought  
Aimed for your queen's destruction : nor is this  
Against me to be charged, that foreign friends  
Should labour for my liberty. Thus much  
At sundry times I have signified aloud  
By open message to her, that I would still  
Seek mine own freedom. Who shall bar me this ?  
Who tax me with unreason, that I sent  
Unjust conditions on my part to be  
To her propounded, which now many times  
Have alway found rejection ? yea, when even  
For hostages I proffered in my stead  
To be delivered up with mine own son  
The duke of Guise's, both to stand in pledge  
That nor your queen nor kingdom should through  
me  
Take aught of damage ; so that hence by proof  
I see myself utterly from all hope  
Already barred of freedom. But I now  
Am dealt with most unworthily, whose fame  
And honourable repute are called in doubt  
Before such foreign men of law as may



By miserable conclusions of their craft  
Draw every thin and shallow circumstance  
Out into compass of a consequence :  
Whereas the anointed heads and consecrate  
Of princes are not subject to such laws  
As private men are. Next, whereas ye are given  
Authority but to look such matters through  
As tend to the hurt of your queen's person, yet  
Here is the cause so handled, and so far  
Here are my letters wrested, that the faith  
Which I profess, the immunity and state  
Of foreign princes, and their private right  
Of mutual speech by word reciprocate  
From royal hand to royal, all in one  
Are called in question, and myself by force  
Brought down beneath my kingly dignity  
And made to appear before a judgment-seat  
As one held guilty ; to none end but this,  
All to none other purpose but that I  
Might from all natural favour of the queen  
Be quite excluded, and my right cut off  
From claim hereditary : whereas I stand  
Here of mine own goodwill to clear myself  
Of all objected to me, lest I seem  
To have aught neglected in the full defence  
Of mine own innocency and honour. This  
Would I bring likewise in your minds, how once  
This queen herself of yours, Elizabeth,  
Was drawn in question of conspiracy  
That Wyatt raised against her sister, yet  
Ye know she was most innocent. For me,  
With very heart's religion I affirm,  
Though I desire the Catholics here might stand  
Assured of safety, this I would not yet

Buy with the blood and death of any one.  
And on mine own part rather would I play  
Esther than Judith ; for the people's sake  
To God make intercession, than deprive  
The meanest of the people born of life.  
Mine enemies have made broad report aloud  
That I was irreligious : yet the time  
Has been I would have learnt the faith ye hold,  
But none would suffer me, for all I sought,  
To find such teaching at your teachers' hands ;  
As though they cared not what my soul became.  
And now at last, when all ye can ye have done  
Against me, and have barred me from my right,  
Ye may chance fail yet of your cause and hope.  
To God and to the princes of my kin  
I make again appeal, from you again  
Record my protestation, and reject  
All judgment of your court : I had rather die  
Thus undishonoured, even a thousand deaths,  
Than so bring down the height of majesty ;  
Yea, and thereby confess myself as bound  
By all the laws of England, even in faith  
Of things religious, who could never learn  
What manner of laws these were : I am destitute  
Of counsellors, and who shall be my peers  
To judge my cause through and give doom thereon  
I am ignorant wholly, being an absolute queen,  
And will do nought which may impair that state  
In me nor other princes, nor my son ;  
Since yet my mind is not dejected, nor  
Will I sink under my calamity.  
My notes are taken from me, and no man  
Dares but step forth to be my advocate.  
I am clear from all crime done against the queen,

I have stirred not up one man against her : yet,  
Albeit of many dangers overpast  
I have thoroughly forewarned her, still I found  
No credit, but have always been contemned,  
Though nearest to her in blood allied. When late  
Ye made association, and thereon  
An act against their lives on whose behalf,  
Though innocent even as ignorance of it, aught  
Might be contrived to endangering of the queen  
From foreign force abroad, or privy plots  
At home of close rebellion, I foresaw  
That, whatsoever of peril so might rise  
Or more than all this for religion's sake,  
My many mortal enemies in her court  
Should lay upon me all the charge, and I  
Bear the whole blame of all men. Certainly,  
I well might take it hardly, nor without  
High cause, that such confederacy was made  
With mine own son, and I not knowing : but this  
I speak not of, being not so grieved thereat  
As that mine own dear sister, that the queen,  
Is misinformed of me, and I, now kept  
These many years in so strait prison, and grown  
Lame of my limbs, have lien neglected, nor  
For all most reasonable conditions made  
Or proffered to redeem my liberty  
Found audience or acceptance : and at last  
Here am I set with none to plead for me.  
But this I pray, that on this matter of mine  
Another meeting there be kept, and I  
Be granted on my part an advocate  
To hold my cause up ; or that seeing ye know  
I am a princess, I may be believed  
By mine own word, being princely : for should I

Stand to your judgment, who most plainly I see  
Are armed against me strong in prejudice,  
It were mine extreme folly : more than this,  
That ever I came to England in such trust  
As of the plighted friendship of your queen  
And comfort of her promise. Look, my lords,  
Here on this ring : her pledge of love was this  
And surety sent me when I lay in bonds  
Of mine own rebels once : regard it well :  
In trust of this I came amongst you : none  
But sees what faith I have found to keep this trust.

## BURGHLEY

Whereas I bear a double person, being  
Commissioner first, then counsellor in this cause,  
From me as from the queen's commissioner here  
Receive a few words first. Your protest made  
Is now on record, and a transcript of it  
Shall be delivered you. To us is given  
Under the queen's hand our authority, whence  
Is no appeal, this grant being ratified  
With the great seal of England ; nor are we  
With prejudice come hither, but to judge  
By the straight rule of justice. On their part,  
These the queen's learned counsel here in place  
Do level at nothing else but that the truth  
May come to light, how far you have made offence  
Against the person of the queen. To us  
Full power is given to hear and diligently  
Examine all the matter, though yourself  
Were absent : yet for this did we desire  
To have your presence here, lest we might seem  
To have derogated from your honour : nor

Designed to object against you anything  
But what you knew of, or took part therein,  
Against the queen's life bent. For this were these  
Your letters brought in question, but to unfold  
Your aim against her person, and therewith  
All matters to it belonging ; which perforce  
Are so with other matters interlaced  
As none may sever them. Hence was there need  
Set all these forth, not parcels here and there,  
Whose circumstances do the assurance give  
Upon what points you dealt with Babington.

## MARY STUART

The circumstances haply may find proof,  
But the fact never. Mine integrity  
Nor on the memory nor the credit hangs  
Of these my secretaries, albeit I know  
They are men of honest hearts : yet if they have  
Confessed in fear of torture anything  
Or hope of guerdon and impunity,  
It may not be admitted, for just cause,  
Which I will elsewhere allege. Men's minds  
Are with affections diversly distraught  
And borne about of passion : nor would these  
Have ever avowed such things against me, save  
For their own hope and profit. Letters may  
Toward other hands be outwardly addressed  
Than they were writ for : yea, and many times  
Have many things been privily slipped in mine  
Which from my tongue came never. Were I not  
Reft of my papers, and my secretary  
Kept from me, better might I then confute  
These things cast up against me.

BURGHLEY

But there shall  
Be nothing brought against you save what last  
Stands charged, even since the nineteenth day of June :  
Nor would your papers here avail you, seeing  
Your secretaries, and Babington himself,  
Being of the rack unquestioned, have affirmed  
You sent those letters to him ; which though yourself  
Deny, yet whether more belief should here  
On affirmation or negation hang  
Let the commissioners judge. But, to come back,  
This next I tell you as a counsellor,  
Time after time you have put forth many things  
Propounded for your freedom ; that all these  
Have fallen all profitless, 'tis long of you,  
And of the Scots ; in no wise of the queen.  
For first the lords of Scotland, being required,  
Flatly refused, to render up the king  
In hostage : and when treaty last was held  
Upon your freedom, then was Parry sent  
By your dependant Morgan privily  
To make the queen away by murder.

MARY STUART

Ah !

You are my adversary.

BURGHLEY

Yea, surely I am  
To the queen's adversaries an adversary.  
But now hereof enough : let us proceed  
Henceforth to proofs.

MARY STUART

I will not hear them.

BURGHLEY

Yet

Hear them will we.

MARY STUART

And in another place  
I too will hear them, and defend myself.

GAWDY

First let your letters to Charles Paget speak,  
Wherein you show him there is none other way  
For Spain to bring the Netherlands again  
To the old obedience, but by setting up  
A prince in England that might help his cause :  
Then to Lord Paget, to bring hastilier  
His forces up for help to invade this land :  
And Cardinal Allen's letter, hailing you  
His most dread sovereign lady, and signifying  
The matter to the prince of Parma's care  
To be commended.

MARY STUART

I am so sore beset  
I know not how by point and circumstance  
To meet your manifold impeachments : this  
I see through all this charge for evil truth,  
That Babington and my two secretaries  
Have even to excuse themselves accused me : yet,

As touching their conspiracy, this I say,  
Of those six men for execution chosen  
I never heard : and all the rest is nought  
To this pretended purpose of your charge.  
For Cardinal Allen, whatsoe'er he have writ,  
I hold him for a reverend prelate, so  
To be esteemed, no more : none save the Pope  
Will I acknowledge for the church's head  
And sovereign thence on thought or spirit of mine :  
But in what rank and place I stand esteemed  
Of him and foreign princes through the world  
I know not : neither can I hinder them  
By letters writ of their own hearts and hands  
To hail me queen of England. As for those  
Whose duty and plain allegiance sworn to me  
Stands flawed in all men's sight, my secretaries,  
These merit no belief. They which have once  
Forsworn themselves, albeit they swear again  
With oaths and protestations ne'er so great,  
Are not to be believed. Nor may these men  
By what sworn oath soever hold them bound  
In court of conscience, seeing they have sworn to me  
Their secrecy and fidelity before,  
And are no subjects of this country. Nau  
Hath many times writ other than I bade,  
And Curle sets down whate'er Nau bids him write ;  
But for my part I am ready in all to bear  
The burden of their fault, save what may lay  
A blot upon mine honour. Haply too  
These things did they confess to save themselves ;  
Supposing their avowal could hurt not me,  
Who, being a queen, they thought, good ignorant  
men,  
More favourably must needs be dealt withal.



For Ballard, I ne'er heard of any such,  
But of one Hallard once that proffered me  
Such help as I would none of, knowing this man  
Had vowed his service too to Walsingham.

## GAWDY

Next, from your letters to Mendoza, writ  
By Curle, as freely his confession shows,  
In privy cipher, take these few brief notes  
For perfect witness of your full design.  
You find yourself, the Spaniard hears thereby,  
Sore troubled what best course to take anew  
For your affairs this side the sea, whereon  
Charles Paget hath a charge to impart from you  
Some certain overtures to Spain and him  
In your behalf, whom you desire with prayer  
Show freely what he thinks may be obtained  
Thus from the king his master. One point more  
Have you reserved thereon depending, which  
On your behalf you charge him send the king  
Some secret word concerning, no man else,  
If this be possible, being privy to it:  
Even this, that seeing your son's great obstinacy  
In heresy, and foreseeing too sure thereon  
Most imminent danger and harm thence like to ensue  
To the Catholic church, he coming to bear rule  
Within this kingdom, you are resolved at heart  
In case your son be not reduced again  
To the Catholic faith before your death, whereof  
Plainly you say small hope is yours so long  
As he shall bide in Scotland, to give up  
To that said king, and grant in absolute right,  
Your claim upon succession to this crown,

By your last will made ; praying him on this cause  
From that time forth wholly to take yourself  
Into his keeping, and therewith the state  
And charge of all this country : which, you say,  
You cannot for discharge of conscience think  
That you could put into a prince's hands  
More zealous for your faith, and abler found  
To build it strong upon this side again,  
Even as through all parts else of Christendom.  
But this let silence keep in secret, lest  
Being known it be your dowry's loss in France,  
And open breach in Scotland with your son,  
And in this realm of England utterly  
Your ruin and destruction. On your part  
Next is he bidden thank his lord the king  
For liberal grace and sovereign favour shown  
Lord Paget and his brother, which you pray him  
Most earnestly to increase, and gratify  
Poor Morgan with some pension for your sake  
Who hath not for your sake only endured so much  
But for the common cause. Likewise, and last,  
Is one he knows commended to his charge  
With some more full supply to be sustained  
Than the entertainment that yourself allot  
According to the little means you have.

## BURGHLEY

Hereon stands proof apparent of that charge  
Which you but now put by, that you design  
To give your right supposed upon this realm  
Into the Spaniard's hold ; and on that cause  
Lie now at Rome Allen and Parsons, men  
Your servants and our traitors.

MARY STUART

No such proof  
Lives but by witness of revolted men,  
My traitors and your helpers ; who to me  
Have broken their allegiance bound by oath.  
When being a prisoner clothed about with cares  
I languished out of hope of liberty,  
Nor yet saw hope to effect of those things aught  
Which many and many looked for at my hands,  
Declining now through age and sickness, this  
To some seemed good, even for religion's sake,  
That the succession here of the English crown  
Should or be stablished in the Spanish king  
Or in some English Catholic. And a book  
Was sent to me to avow the Spaniard's claim ;  
Which being of me allowed not, some there were  
In whose displeasure thence I fell ; but now  
Seeing all my hope in England desperate grown,  
I am fully minded to reject no aid  
Abroad, but resolute to receive it.

WALSINGHAM

Sirs,

Bethink you, were the kingdom so conveyed,  
What should become of you and all of yours,  
Estates and honours and posterities,  
Being to such hands delivered.

BURGHLEY

Nay, but these

In no such wise can be conveyed away  
By personal will, but by successive right  
Still must descend in heritage of law.

Whereto your own words witness, saying if this  
Were blown abroad your cause were utterly  
Lost in all hearts of English friends. Therein  
Your thoughts hit right : for here in all men's minds  
That are not mad with envying at the truth  
Death were no loathlier than a stranger king.  
If you would any more, speak : if not aught,  
This cause is ended.

## MARY STUART

I require again  
Before a full and open parliament  
Hearing, or speech in person with the queen,  
Who shall, I hope, have of a queen regard,  
And with the council. So, in trust hereof,  
I crave a word with some of you apart,  
And of this main assembly take farewell.

## ACT IV

### *ELIZABETH*

#### SCENE I. *Richmond*

WALSINGHAM *and* DAVISON

WALSINGHAM

It is God's wrath, too sure, that holds her hand ;  
His plague upon this people, to preserve  
By her sole mean her deadliest enemy, known  
By proof more potent than approof of law  
In all points guilty, but on more than all  
Toward all this country dangerous. To take off  
From the court held last month at Fotheringay  
Authority with so full commission given  
To pass upon her judgment—suddenly  
Cut short by message of some three lines writ  
With hurrying hand at midnight, and despatched  
To maim its work upon the second day,  
What else may this be in so wise a queen  
But madness, as a brand to sear the brain  
Of one by God infatuate? yea, and now  
That she receives the French ambassador  
With one more special envoy from his king,  
Except their message touch her spleen with fire

And so undo itself, we cannot tell  
What doubt may work upon her. Had we but  
Some sign more evident of some private seal  
Confirming toward her by more personal proof  
The Scottish queen's inveteracy, for this  
As for our country plucked from imminent death  
We might thank God : but with such gracious words  
Of piteous challenge and imperial plea  
She hath wrought by letter on our mistress' mind,  
We may not think her judgment so could slip,  
Borne down with passion or forgetfulness,  
As to leave bare her bitter root of heart  
And core of evil will there labouring.

DAVISON

Yet

I see no shade of other surety cast  
From any sign of likelihood. It were  
Not shameful more than dangerous, though she bade,  
To have her prisoner privily made away ;  
Yet stands the queen's heart wellnigh fixed hereon  
When aught may seem to fix it ; then as fast  
Wavers, but veers to that bad point again  
Whence blowing the wind blows down her honour,  
nor  
Brings surety of life with fame's destruction.

WALSINGHAM

Ay,

We are no Catholic keepers, and his charge  
Need fear no poison in our watch-dog's fang,  
Though he show honest teeth at her, to threat  
Thieves' hands with loyal danger.

*Enter QUEEN ELIZABETH, attended by BURGHLEY, LEICESTER, HUNSDON, HATTON, and others of the Council*

ELIZABETH

No, my lords,  
We are not so weak of wit as men that need  
Be counselled of their enemies. Blame us not  
That we accuse your friendship on this cause  
Of too much fearfulness : France we will hear,  
Nor doubt but France shall hear us all as loud  
As friend or foe may threaten or protest,  
Of our own heart advised, and resolute more  
Than hearts that need men's counsel. Bid them in.

*Enter CHÂTEAUNEUF and BELLIÈVRE, attended*

From our fair cousin of France what message, sirs ?

BELLIÈVRE

I, madam, have in special charge to lay  
The king's mind open to your majesty,  
Which gives my tongue first leave of speech more  
free  
Than from a common envoy. Sure it is,  
No man more grieves at what his heart abhors,  
The counsels of your highness' enemies,  
Than doth the king of France : wherein how far  
The queen your prisoner have borne part, or may  
Seem of their works partaker, he can judge  
Nought : but much less the king may understand  
What men may stand accusers, who rise up  
Judge in so great a matter. Men of law

May lay their charges on a subject : but  
The queen of Scotland, dowager queen of France,  
And sister made by wedlock to the king,  
To none being subject, can be judged of none  
Without such violence done on rule as breaks  
Prerogative of princes. Nor may man  
That looks upon your present majesty  
In such clear wise apparent, and retains  
Remembrance of your name through all the world  
For virtuous wisdom, bring his mind to think  
That England's royal-souled Elizabeth,  
Being set so high in fame, can so forget  
Wise Plato's word, that common souls are wrought  
Out of dull iron and slow lead, but kings  
Of gold untempered with so vile alloy  
As makes all metal up of meaner men.  
But say this were not thus, and all men's awe  
Were from all time toward kingship merely vain,  
And state no more worth reverence, yet the plea  
Were nought which here your ministers pretend,  
That while the queen of Scots lives you may live .  
No day that knows not danger. Were she dead,  
Rather might then your peril wax indeed  
To shape and sense of heavier portent, whom  
The Catholic states now threat not, nor your land,  
For this queen's love, but rather for their faith's,  
Whose cause, were she by violent hand removed,  
Could be but furthered, and its enterprise  
Put on more strong and prosperous pretext ; yea,  
You shall but draw the invasion on this land  
Whose threat you so may think to stay, and bring  
Imminence down of inroad. Thus far forth  
The queen of Scots hath for your person been  
Even as a targe or buckler which has caught



All intercepted shafts against your state  
Shot, or a stone held fast within your hand,  
Which, if you cast it thence in fear or wrath  
To smite your adversary, is cast away,  
And no mean left therein for menace. If  
You lay but hand upon her life, albeit  
There were that counselled this, her death will make  
Your enemies weapons of their own despair  
And give their whetted wrath excuse and edge  
More plausibly to strike more perilously.  
Your grace is known for strong in foresight : we  
These nineteen years of your wise reign have kept  
Fast watch in France upon you : of those claims  
Which lineally this queen here prisoner may  
Put forth on your succession have you made  
The stoutest rampire of your rule : and this  
Is grown a byword with us, that their cause  
Who shift the base whereon their policies lean  
Bows down toward ruin : and of loyal heart  
This will I tell you, madam, which hath been  
Given me for truth assured of one whose place  
Affirms him honourable, how openly  
A certain prince's minister that well  
May stand in your suspicion says abroad  
That for his master's greatness it were good  
The queen of Scots were lost already, seeing  
He is well assured the Catholics here should then  
All wholly range them on his master's part.  
Thus long hath reigned your highness happily,  
Who have loved fair temperance more than violence :  
now,  
While honour bids have mercy, wisdom holds  
Equal at least the scales of interest. Think  
What name shall yours be found in time far hence,

Even as you deal with her that in your hand  
Lies not more subject than your fame to come  
In men's repute that shall be. Bid her live,  
And ever shall my lord stand bound to you  
And you for ever firm in praise of men.

## ELIZABETH

I am sorry, sir, you are hither come from France  
Upon no better errand. I appeal  
To God for judge between my cause and hers  
Whom here you stand for. In this realm of mine  
The queen of Scots sought shelter, and therein  
Hath never found but kindness ; for which grace  
In recompense she hath three times sought my life.  
No grief that on this head yet ever fell  
Shook ever from mine eyes so many a tear  
As this last plot upon it. I have read  
As deep I doubt me in as many books  
As any queen or prince in Christendom,  
Yet never chanced on aught so strange and sad  
As this my state's calamity. Mine own life  
Is by mere nature precious to myself,  
And in mine own realm I can live not safe.  
I am a poor lone woman, girt about  
With secret enemies that perpetually  
Lay wait for me to kill me. From your king  
Why have not I my traitor to my hands  
Delivered up, who now this second time  
Hath sought to slay me, Morgan ? On my part,  
Had mine own cousin Hunsdon here conspired  
Against the French king's life, he had found not so  
Refuge of me, nor even for kindred's sake

From the edge of law protection : and this cause  
Needs present evidence of this man's mouth.

## BELLÈVRE

Madam, there stand against the queen of Scots  
Already here in England on this charge  
So many and they so dangerous witnesses  
No need can be to bring one over more :  
Nor can the king show such unnatural heart  
As to send hither a knife for enemies' hands  
To cut his sister's throat. Most earnestly  
My lord expects your resolution : which  
If we receive as given against his plea,  
I must crave leave to part for Paris hence.  
Yet give me pardon first if yet once more  
I pray your highness be assured, and so  
Take heed in season, you shall find this queen  
More dangerous dead than living. Spare her life,  
And not my lord alone but all that reign  
Shall be your sureties in all Christian lands  
Against all scathe of all conspiracies  
Made on her party : while such remedies' ends  
As physic states with bloodshedding, to cure  
Danger by death, bring fresh calamities  
Far oftener forth than the old are healed of them  
Which so men thought to medicine. To refrain  
From that red-handed way of rule, and set  
Justice no higher than mercy sits beside,  
Is the first mean of kings' prosperity  
That would reign long : nor will my lord believe  
Your highness could put off yourself so much  
As to reverse and tread upon the law  
That you thus long have kept and honourably :

But should this perilous purpose hold right on,  
I am bounden by my charge to say, the king  
Will not regard as liable to your laws  
A queen's imperial person, nor will hold  
Her death as but the general wrong of kings  
And no more his than as his brethren's all,  
But as his own and special injury done,  
More than to these injurious.

ELIZABETH

Doth your lord

Bid you speak thus?

BELLIÈVRE

Ay, madam : from his mouth  
Had I command what speech to use.

ELIZABETH

You have done

Better to speak than he to send it. Sir,  
You shall not presently depart this land  
As one denied of mere discourtesy.  
I will return an envoy of mine own  
To speak for me at Paris with the king.  
You shall bear back a letter from my hand,  
And give your lord assurance, having seen,  
I cannot be so frightened with men's threats  
That they shall not much rather move my mind  
To quicken than to slack the righteous doom  
Which none must think by menace to put back,  
Or daunt it with defiance. Sirs, good day.

*[Exeunt Ambassadors.]*

I were as one belated with false lights  
If I should think to steer my darkling way  
By twilight furtherance of their wiles and words.  
Think you, my lords, France yet would have her live?

## BURGHLEY

If there be other than the apparent end  
Hid in this mission to your majesty,  
Mine envoys can by no means fathom it,  
Who deal for me at Paris : fear of Spain  
Lays double hand as 'twere upon the king,  
Lest by removal of the queen of Scots  
A way be made for peril in the claim  
More potent then of Philip ; and if there come  
From his Farnese note of enterprise  
Or danger this way tending, France will yet  
Cleave to your friendship though his sister die.

## ELIZABETH

So, in your mind, this half-souled brother would  
Steer any way that might keep safe his sail  
Against a southern wind, which here, he thinks,  
Her death might strengthen from the north again  
To blow against him off our subject straits,  
Made servile then and Spanish ? Yet perchance  
There swells behind our seas a heart too high  
To bow more easily down, and bring this land  
More humbly to such handling, than their waves  
Bow down to ships of strangers, or their storms  
To breath of any lord on earth but God.  
What thinks our cousin ?

HUNSDON

That if Spain or France  
Or both be stronger than the heart in us  
Which beats to battle ere they menace, why,  
In God's name, let them rise and make their prey  
Of what was England : but if neither be,  
The smooth-cheeked French man-harlot, nor that  
hand  
Which help to light Rome's fires with English limbs,  
Let us not keep to make their weakness strong  
A pestilence here alive in England, which  
Gives force to their faint enmities, and burns  
Half the heart out of loyal trust and hope  
With heat that kindles treason.

ELIZABETH

By this light,  
I have heard worse counsel from a wise man's tongue  
Than this clear note of forthright soldiership.  
How say you, Dudley, to it ?

LEICESTER

Madam, ere this  
You have had my mind upon the matter, writ  
But late from Holland, that no public stroke  
Should fall upon this princess, who may be  
By privy death more happily removed  
Without impeach of majesty, nor leave  
A sign against your judgment, to call down  
Blame of strange kings for wrong to kinship wrought  
Though right were done to justice.

ELIZABETH

Of your love

We know it is that comes this counsel ; nor,  
Had we such friends of all our servants, need  
Our mind be now distraught with dangerous doubts  
That find no screen from dangers. Yet meseems  
One doubt stands now removed, if doubt there were  
Of aught from Scotland ever : Walsingham,  
You should have there intelligence whereof  
To make these lords with us partakers.

WALSINGHAM

Nay,

Madam, no more than from a trustless hand  
Protest and promise : of those twain that come  
Hot on these Frenchmen's heels in embassy,  
He that in counsel on this cause was late  
One with my lord of Leicester now, to rid  
By draught of secret death this queen away,  
Bears charge to say as these gone hence have said  
In open audience, but by personal note  
Hath given me this to know, that howsoe'er  
His king indeed desire her life be spared  
Much may be wrought upon him, would your grace  
More richly line his ragged wants with gold  
And by full utterance of your parliament  
Approve him heir in England.

ELIZABETH

Ay ! no more ?

God's blood ! what grace is proffered us at need,  
And on what mild conditions ! Say I will not  
Redeem such perils at so dear a price,

Shall not our pensioner too join hands with France  
And pay my gold with iron barter back  
At edge of sword he dares not look upon,  
They tell us, for the scathe and scare he took  
Even in this woman's womb when shot and steel  
Undid the manhood in his veins unborn  
And left his tongue's threats helpless?

## WALSINGHAM

Men there be,

Your majesty must think, who bear but ill,  
For pride of country and high-heartedness,  
To see the king they serve your servant so  
That not his mother's life and once their queen's  
Being at such point of peril can enforce  
One warlike word of his for chance of war  
Conditional against you. Word came late  
From Edinburgh that there the citizens  
With hoot and hiss had bayed him through the streets  
As he went heartless by; of whom they had heard  
This published saying, that in his personal mind  
The blood of kindred or affinity  
So much not binds us as the friendship pledged  
To them that are not of our blood: and this  
Stands clear for certain, that no breath of war  
Shall breathe from him against us though she die,  
Except his titular claim be reft from him  
On our succession: and that all his mind  
Is but to reign unpartnered with a power  
Which should weigh down that half his kingdom's  
weight  
Left to his hand's share nominally in hold:  
And for his mother, this would he desire,  
That she were kept from this day to her death



Close prisoner in one chamber, never more  
To speak with man or woman : and hereon  
That proclamation should be made of her  
As of one subject formally declared  
To the English law whereby, if she offend  
Again with iterance of conspiracy,  
She shall not as a queen again be tried,  
But as your vassal and a private head  
Live liable to the doom and stroke of death.

## ELIZABETH

She is bounden to him as he long since to her,  
Who would have given his kingdom up at least  
To his dead father's slayer, in whose red hand  
How safe had lain his life too doubt may guess,  
Which yet kept dark her purpose then on him,  
Dark now no more to usward. Think you then  
That they belie him, whose suspicion saith  
His ear and heart are yet inclined to Spain,  
If from that brother-in-law that was of yours  
And would have been our bridegroom he may win  
Help of strange gold and foreign soldiership,  
With Scottish furtherance of those Catholic lords  
Who are stronger-spirited in their faith than ours,  
Being harried more of heretics, as they say,  
Than these within our borders, to root out  
The creed there stablished now, and do to death  
Its ministers, with all the lords their friends,  
Lay hands on all strong places there, and rule  
As prince upon their party ? since he fain  
From ours would be divided, and cast in  
His lot with Rome against us too, from these  
Might he but earn assurance of their faith,

Revolted from his own. May these things be  
More than mere muttering breath of trustless lies,  
And half his heart yet hover toward our side  
For all such hope or purpose?

## WALSINGHAM

Of his heart  
We know not, madam, surely ; nor doth he  
Who follows fast on their first envoy sent,  
And writes to excuse him of his message here  
On her behalf apparent, but in sooth  
Aimed otherwise ; the Master I mean of Gray,  
Who swears me here by letter, if he be not  
True to the queen of England, he is content  
To have his head fall on a scaffold : saying,  
To put from him this charge of embassy  
Had been his ruin, but the meaning of it  
Is modest and not menacing : whereto  
If you will yield not yet to spare the life  
So near its forfeit now, he thinks it well  
You should be pleased by some commission given  
To stay by the way his comrade and himself,  
Or bid them back.

## ELIZABETH

What man is this then, sent  
With such a knave to fellow ?

## WALSINGHAM

No such knave,  
But still your prisoner's friend of old time found :  
Sir Robert Melville.

ELIZABETH

And an honest man

As faith might wish her servants : but what pledge  
Will these produce me for security  
That I may spare this dangerous life and live  
Unscathed of after practice ?

WALSINGHAM

As I think,

The king's self and his whole nobility  
Will be her personal pledges ; and her son,  
If England yield her to his hand in charge,  
On no less strait a bond will undertake  
For her safe keeping.

ELIZABETH

That were even to arm  
With double power mine adversary, and make him  
The stronger by my hand to do me hurt—  
Were he mine adversary indeed : which yet  
I will not hold him. Let them find a mean  
For me to live unhurt and save her life,  
It shall well please me. Say this king of Scots  
Himself would give his own inheritance up  
Pretended in succession, if but once  
Her hand were found or any friend's of hers  
Again put forth upon me for her sake,  
Why, haply so might hearts be satisfied  
Of lords and commons then to let her live.  
But this I doubt he had rather take her life  
Himself than yield up to us for pledge : and less,  
These men shall know of me, I will not take  
In price of her redemption : which were else,

And haply may in no wise not be held,  
To this my loyal land and mine own trust  
A deadlier stroke and blast of sound more dire  
Than noise of fleets invasive.

## WALSINGHAM

Surely so  
Would all hearts hold it, madam, in that land  
That are not enemies of the land and yours ;  
For ere the doom had been proclaimed an hour  
Which gave to death your main foe's head and theirs  
Yourself have heard what fire of joy brake forth  
From all your people : how their church-towers all  
Rang in with jubilant acclaim of bells  
The day that bore such tidings, and the night  
That laughed aloud with lightning of their joy  
And thundered round its triumph : twice twelve hours  
This tempest of thanksgiving roared and shone  
Sheer from the Solway's to the Channel's foam  
With light as from one festal-flaming hearth  
And sound as of one trumpet : not a tongue  
But praised God for it, or heart that leapt not up,  
Save of your traitors and their country's : these  
Withered at heart and shrank their heads in close,  
As though the bright sun's were a basilisk's eye,  
And light, that gave all others comfort, flame  
And smoke to theirs of hell's own darkness, whence  
Such eyes were blinded or put out with fire.

## ELIZABETH

Yea, I myself, I mind me, might not sleep  
Those twice twelve hours thou speak'st of. By God's  
light,

Be it most in love of me or fear of her  
I know not, but my people seems in sooth  
Hot and anhungered on this trail of hers :  
Nor is it a people bloody-minded, used  
To lap the life up of an enemy's vein  
Who bleeds to death unweaponed : our good hounds  
Will course a quarry soldierlike in war,  
But rage not hangmanlike upon the prey,  
To flesh their fangs on limbs that strive not : yet  
Their hearts are hotter on this course than mine,  
Which most was deadliest aimed at.

## WALSINGHAM

Even for that

How should not theirs be hot as fire from hell  
To burn your danger up and slay that soul  
Alive that seeks it ? Thinks your majesty  
There beats a heart where treason hath not turned  
All English blood to poison, which would feel  
No deadlier pang of dread more deathful to it  
To hear of yours endangered than to feel  
A sword against its own life bent, or know  
Death imminent as darkness overhead  
That takes the noon from one man's darkening eye  
As must your death from all this people's ? You  
Are very England : in your light of life  
This living land of yours walks only safe,  
And all this breathing people with your breath  
Breathes unenslaved, and draws at each pulse in  
Freedom : your eye is light of theirs, your word  
As God's to comfort England, whose whole soul  
Is made with yours one, and her witness you  
That Rome or hell shall take not hold on her

Again till God be wroth with us so much  
As to reclaim for heaven the star that yet  
Lights all your land that looks on it, and gives  
Assurance higher than danger dares assail  
Save in this lady's name and service, who  
Must now from you take judgment.

## ELIZABETH

Must ! by God,

I know not *must* but as a word of mine,  
My tongue's and not mine ear's familiar.  Sirs,  
Content yourselves to know this much of us,  
Or having known remember, that we sent  
The Lord of Buckhurst and our servant Beale  
To acquaint this queen our prisoner with the doom  
Confirmed on second trial against her, saying  
Her word can weigh not down the weightier guilt  
Approved upon her, and by parliament  
Since fortified with sentence.  Yea, my lords,  
Ye should forget not how by message then  
I bade her know of me with what strong force  
Of strenuous and invincible argument  
I am urged to hold no more in such delay  
The process of her execution, being  
The seed-plot of these late conspiracies,  
Their author and chief motive : and am told  
That if I yield not mine the guilt must be  
In God's and in the whole world's suffering sight  
Of all the miseries and calamities  
To ensue on my refusal : whence, albeit  
I know not yet how God shall please to incline  
My heart on that behalf, I have thought it meet  
In conscience yet that she should be forewarned,

That so she might bethink her of her sins  
Done both toward God offensive and to me  
And pray for grace to be true penitent  
For all these faults : which, had the main fault  
reached

No further than mine own poor person, God  
Stands witness with what truth my heart protests  
I freely would have pardoned. She to this  
Makes bitter answer as of desperate heart  
All we may wreak our worst upon her ; whom  
Having to death condemned, we may fulfil  
Our wicked work, and God in Paradise  
With just atonement shall requite her. This  
Ye see is all the pardon she will ask,  
Being only, and even as 'twere with prayer, desired  
To crave of us forgiveness : and thereon  
Being by Lord Buckhurst charged on this point home  
That by her mean the Catholics here had learnt  
To hold her for their sovereign, on which cause  
Nor my religion nor myself might live  
Uncharged with danger while her life should last,  
She answering gives God thanks aloud to be  
Held of so great account upon his side,  
And in God's cause and in the church of God's  
Rejoicingly makes offering of her life ;  
Which I, God knows how unrejoicingly,  
Can scarce, ye tell me, choose but take, or yield  
At least for you to take it. Yet, being told  
It is not for religion she must die,  
But for a plot by compass of her own  
Laid to dethrone me and destroy, she casts  
Again this answer barbed with mockery back,  
She was not so presumptuous born, to aspire  
To two such ends yet ever : yea, so far

She dwelt from such desire removed in heart,  
She would not have me suffer by her will  
The fillip of a finger : though herself  
Be persecuted even as David once  
And her mishap be that she cannot so  
Fly by the window forth as David : whence  
It seems she likens us to Saul, and looks  
Haply to see us as on Mount Gilboa fallen,  
Where yet, for all the shooters on her side,  
Our shield shall be not vilely cast away,  
As of one unanointed. Yet, my lords,  
If England might but by my death attain  
A state more flourishing with a better prince,  
Gladly would I lay down my life ; who have  
No care save only for my people's sake  
To keep it : for myself, in all the world  
I see no great cause why for all this coil  
I should be fond to live or fear to die.  
If I should say unto you that I mean  
To grant not your petition, by my faith,  
More should I so say haply than I mean :  
Or should I say I mean to grant it, this  
Were, as I think, to tell you of my mind  
More than is fit for you to know : and thus  
I must for all petitionary prayer  
Deliver you an answer answerless.  
Yet will I pray God lighten my dark mind  
That being illumined it may thence foresee  
What for his church and all this commonwealth  
May most be profitable : and this once known,  
My hand shall halt not long behind his will.



SCENE II. *Fotheringay*SIR AMYAS PAULET *and* SIR DREW DRURY

PAULET

I never gave God heartier thanks than these  
I give to have you partner of my charge  
Now most of all, these letters being to you  
No less designed than me, and you in heart  
One with mine own upon them. Certainly,  
When I put hand to pen this morning past  
That Master Davison by mine evidence  
Might note what sore disquietudes I had  
To increase my griefs before of body and mind,  
I looked for no such word to cut off mine  
As these to us both of Walsingham's and his.  
Would rather yet I had cause to still complain  
Of those unanswered letters two months past  
Than thus be certified of such intents  
As God best knoweth I never sought to know,  
Or search out secret causes : though to hear  
Nothing at all did breed, as I confessed,  
In me some hard conceits against myself,  
I had rather yet rest ignorant than ashamed  
Of such ungracious knowledge. This shall be  
Fruit as I think of dread wrought on the queen  
By those seditious rumours whose report  
Blows fear among the people lest our charge  
Escape our trust, or as they term it now  
Be taken away,—such apprehensive tongues  
So phrase it—and her freedom strike men's hearts  
More deep than all these flying fears that say

London is fired of Papists, or the Scots  
Have crossed in arms the Border, or the north  
Is risen again rebellious, or the Guise  
Is disembarked in Sussex, or that now  
In Milford Haven rides a Spanish fleet—  
All which, albeit but footless floating lies,  
May all too easily smite and work too far  
Even on the heart most royal in the world  
That ever was a woman's.

## DRURY

Good my friend,  
These noises come without a thunderbolt  
In such dense air of dusk expectancy  
As all this land lies under ; nor will some  
Doubt or think much to say of those reports  
They are broached and vented of men's credulous  
mouths  
Whose ears have caught them from such lips as  
meant  
Merely to strike more terror in the queen  
And wring that warrant from her hovering hand  
Which falters yet and flutters on her lip  
While the hand hangs and trembles half advanced  
Upon that sentence which, the treasurer said,  
Should well ere this have spoken, seeing it was  
More than a full month old and four days more  
When he so looked to hear the word of it  
Which yet lies sealed of silence.

## PAULET

Will you say,  
Or any as wise and loyal, say or think

It was but for a show, to scare men's wits,  
They have raised this hue and cry upon her flight  
Supposed from hence, to waken Exeter  
With noise from Honiton and Sampfield spread  
Of proclamation to detain all ships  
And lay all highways for her day and night,  
And send like precepts out four manner of ways  
From town to town, to make in readiness  
Their armour and artillery, with all speed,  
On pain of death, for London by report  
Was set on fire? though, God be therefore praised,  
We know this is not, yet the noise hereof  
Were surely not to be neglected, seeing  
There is, meseems, indeed no readier way  
To levy forces for the achieving that  
Which so these lewd reporters feign to fear.

## DRURY

Why, in such mighty matters and such mists  
Wise men may think what hardly fools would say,  
And eyes get glimpse of more than sight hath leave  
To give commission for the babbling tongue  
Aloud to cry they have seen. This noise that was  
Upon one Arden's flight, a traitor, whence  
Fear flew last week all round us, gave but note  
How lightly may men's minds take fire, and words  
Take wing that have no feet to fare upon  
More solid than a shadow.

## PAULET

Nay, he was  
Escaped indeed : and every day thus brings

Forth its new mischief : as this last month did  
Those treasons of the French ambassador  
Designed against our mistress, which God's grace  
Laid by the knave's mean bare to whom they sought  
For one to slay her, and of the Pope's hand earn  
Ten thousand blood-encrusted crowns a year  
To his most hellish hire. You will not say  
This too was merely fraud or vision wrought  
By fear or cloudy falsehood ?

DRURY

I will say

No more or surelier than I know : and this  
I know not thoroughly to the core of truth  
Or heart of falsehood in it. A man may lie  
Merely, or trim some bald lean truth with lies,  
Or patch bare falsehood with some tatter of truth,  
And each of these pass current : but of these  
Which likeliest may this man's tale be who gave  
Word of his own temptation by these French  
To hire them such a murderer, and avowed  
He held it godly cunning to comply  
And bring this envoy's secretary to sight  
Of one clapped up for debts in Newgate, who  
Being thence released might readily, as he said,  
Even by such means as once this lady's lord  
Was made away with, make the queen away  
With powder fired beneath her bed—why, this,  
Good sooth, I guess not ; but I doubt the man  
To be more liar than fool, and yet, God wot,  
More fool than traitor ; most of all intent  
To conjure coin forth of the Frenchman's purse  
With tricks of mere effrontery : thus at least  
We know did Walsingham esteem of him :

And if by Davison held of more account,  
Or merely found more serviceable, and made  
A mean to tether up those quick French tongues  
From threat or pleading for this prisoner's life,  
I cannot tell, and care not. Though the queen  
Hath stayed this envoy's secretary from flight  
Forth of the kingdom, and committed him  
To ward within the Tower while Châteauneuf  
Himself should come before a council held  
At my lord treasurer's, where being thus accused  
At first he cared not to confront the man,  
But stood upon his office, and the charge  
Of his king's honour and prerogative—  
Then bade bring forth the knave, who being brought  
forth

Outfaced him with insistence front to front  
And took the record of this whole tale's truth  
Upon his soul's damnation, challenging  
The Frenchman's answer in denial hereof,  
That of his own mouth had this witness been  
Traitorously tempted, and by personal plea  
Directly drawn to treason : which awhile  
Struck dumb the ambassador as amazed with wrath,  
Till presently, the accuser being removed,  
He made avowal this fellow some while since  
Had given his secretary to wit there lay  
One bound in Newgate who being thence released  
Would take the queen's death on his hand : whereto  
Answering, he bade the knave avoid his house  
On pain, if once their ways should cross, to be  
Sent bound before the council : who replied  
He had done foul wrong to take no further note,  
But being made privy to this damned device  
Keep close its perilous knowledge ; whence the queen

Might well complain against him ; and hereon  
They fell to wrangling on this cause, that he  
Professed himself to no man answerable  
For declaration or for secret held  
Save his own master : so that now is gone  
Sir William Wade to Paris, not with charge  
To let the king there know this queen shall live,  
But to require the ambassador's recall  
And swift delivery of our traitors there  
To present justice : yet may no man say,  
For all these half-faced scares and policies,  
Here was more sooth than seeming.

PAULET

Why, these crafts  
Were shameful then as fear's most shameful self,  
If thus your wit read them aright ; and we  
Should for our souls and lives alike do ill  
To jeopard them on such men's surety given  
As make no more account of simple faith  
Than true men make of liars : and these are they,  
Our friends and masters, that rebuke us both  
By speech late uttered of her majesty  
For lack of zeal in service and of care  
She looked for at our hands, in that we have not  
In all this time, unprompted, of ourselves  
Found out some way to cut this queen's life off,  
Seeing how great peril, while her enemy lives,  
She is hourly subject unto : saying, she notes,  
Besides a kind of lack of love to her,  
Herein we have not that particular care  
Forsooth of our own safeties, or indeed  
Of the faith rather and the general good,  
That politic reason bids ; especially,

Having so strong a warrant and such ground  
For satisfaction of our consciences  
To Godward, and discharge of credit kept  
And reputation toward the world, as is  
That oath whereby we stand associated  
To prosecute inexorably to death  
Both with our joint and our particular force  
All by whose hand and all on whose behalf  
Our sovereign's life is struck at : as by proof  
Stands charged upon our prisoner. So they write,  
As though the queen's own will had warranted  
The words that by her will's authority  
Were blotted from the bond, whereby that head  
Was doomed on whose behoof her life should be  
By treason threatened : for she would not have  
Aught pass which grieved her subjects' consciences,  
She said, or might abide not openly  
The whole world's view : nor would she any one  
Were punished for another's fault : and so  
Cut off the plea whereon she now desires  
That we should dip our secret hands in blood  
With no direction given of her own mouth  
So to pursue that dangerous head to death  
By whose assent her life were sought : for this  
Stands fixed for only warrant of such deed,  
And this we have not, but her word instead  
She takes it most unkindly toward herself  
That men professing toward her loyally  
That love that we do should in any sort,  
For lack of our own duty's full discharge,  
Cast upon her the burden, knowing as we  
Her slowness to shed blood, much more of one  
So near herself in blood as is this queen,  
And one with her in sex and quality.

And these respects, they find, or so profess,  
Do greatly trouble her : who hath sundry times  
Protested, they assure us, earnestly,  
That if regard of her good subjects' risk  
Did not more move her than the personal fear.  
Of proper peril to her, she never would  
Be drawn to assent unto this bloodshedding :  
And so to our good judgments they refer  
These speeches they thought meet to acquaint us with  
As passed but lately from her majesty,  
And to God's guard commend us : which God knows  
We should much more need than deserve of him  
Should we give ear to this, and as they bid  
Make heretics of these papers ; which three times  
You see how Davison hath enforced on us :  
But they shall taste no fire for me, nor pass  
Back to his hands till copies writ of them  
Lie safe in mine for sons of mine to keep  
In witness how their father dealt herein.

## DRURY

You have done the wiselier : and what word soe'er  
Shall bid them know your mind, I am well assured  
It well may speak for me too.

## PAULET

Thus it shall :  
That having here his letters in my hands,  
I would not fail, according to his charge,  
To send back answer with all possible speed  
Which shall deliver unto him my great grief  
And bitterness of mind, in that I am  
So much unhappy as I hold myself



To have lived to look on this unhappy day,  
When I by plain direction am required  
From my most gracious sovereign's mouth to do  
An act which God forbiddeth, and the law.  
Hers are my goods and livings, and my life,  
Held at her disposition, and myself  
Am ready so to lose them this next day  
If it shall please her so, acknowledging  
I hold them of her mere goodwill, and do not  
Desire them to enjoy them but so long  
As her great grace gives leave : but God forbid  
That I should make for any grace of hers  
So foul a shipwreck of my conscience, or  
Leave ever to my poor posterity  
So great a blot, as privily to shed blood  
With neither law nor warrant. So, in trust  
That she, of her accustomed clemency,  
Will take my dutiful answer in good part,  
By his good mediation, as returned  
From one who never will be less in love,  
Honour, obedience, duty to his queen,  
Than any Christian subject living, thus  
To God's grace I commit him.

## DRURY

Though I doubt  
She haply shall be much more wroth hereat  
Than lately she was gracious, when she bade  
God treblefold reward you for your charge  
So well discharged, saluting you by name  
Most faithful and most careful, you shall do  
Most like a wise man loyally to write  
But such good words as these, whereto myself

Subscribe in heart : though being not named herein  
(Albeit to both seem these late letters meant)  
Nor this directed to me, I forbear  
To make particular answer. And indeed,  
Were danger less apparent in her life  
To the heart's life of all this living land,  
I would this woman might not die at all  
By secret stroke nor open sentence.

## PAULET

## I

Will praise God's mercy most for this of all,  
When I shall see the murderous cause removed  
Of its most mortal peril : nor desire  
A guerdon ampler from the queen we serve,  
Besides her commendations of my faith  
For spotless actions and for safe regards,  
Than to see judgment on her enemy done ;  
Which were for me that recompense indeed  
Whereof she writes as one not given to all,  
But for such merit reserved to crown its claim  
Above all common service : nor save this  
Could any treasure's promise in the world  
So ease those travails and rejoice this heart  
That hers too much takes thought of, as to read  
Her charge to carry for her sake in it  
This most just thought, that she can balance not  
The value that her grace doth prize me at  
In any weight of judgment : yet it were  
A word to me more comfortable at heart  
Than these, though these most gracious, that should  
speak  
Death to her death's contriver.

## DRURY

Nay, myself

Were fain to see this coil wound up, and her  
Removed that makes it : yet such things will pluck  
Hard at men's hearts that think on them, and move  
Compassion that such long strange years should find  
So strange an end : nor shall men ever say  
But she was born right royal ; full of sins,  
It may be, and by circumstance or choice  
Dyed and defaced with bloody stains and black,  
Unmerciful, unfaithful, but of heart  
So fiery high, so swift of spirit and clear,  
In extreme danger and pain so lifted up,  
So of all violent things inviolable,  
So large of courage, so superb of soul,  
So sheathed with iron mind invincible  
And arms unbreached of fireproof constancy—  
By shame not shaken, fear or force or death,  
Change, or all confluence of calamities—  
And so at her worst need beloved, and still,  
Naked of help and honour when she seemed,  
As other women would be, and of hope  
Stripped, still so of herself adorable  
By minds not always all ignobly mad  
Nor all made poisonous with false grain of faith,  
She shall be a world's wonder to all time,  
A deadly glory watched of marvelling men  
Not without praise, not without noble tears,  
And if without what she would never have  
Who had it never, pity—yet from none  
Quite without reverence and some kind of love  
For that which was so royal. Yea, and now  
That at her prayer we here attend on her,

If, as I think, she have in mind to send  
Aught written to the queen, what we may do  
To further her desire shall on my part  
Gladly be done, so be it the grace she craves  
Be nought akin to danger.

PAULET

It shall be  
The first of all then craved by her of man,  
Or by man's service done her, that was found  
So harmless ever.

*Enter MARY STUART and MARY BEATON*

MARY STUART

Sirs, in time past by  
I was desirous many times, ye know,  
To have written to your queen : but since I have had  
Advertisement of my conviction, seeing  
I may not look for life, my soul is set  
On preparation for another world :  
Yet none the less, not for desire of life,  
But for my conscience's discharge and rest,  
And for my last farewell, I have at heart  
By you to send her a memorial writ  
Of somewhat that concerns myself, when I  
Shall presently be gone out of this world.  
And to remove from her, if such be there,  
Suspicion of all danger in receipt  
Of this poor paper that should come from me,  
Myself will take the assay of it, and so  
With mine own hands to yours deliver it.

**PAULET**

Will you not also, madam, be content  
To seal and close it in my presence up?

## MARY STUART

Sir, willingly : but I beseech your word  
Pledged for its safe delivery to the queen.

PAULET

**I plight my faith it shall be sent to her.**

## MARY STUART

This further promise I desire, you will  
Procure me from above certificate  
It hath been there delivered.

**DRURY**

This is more  
 Than we may stand so pledged for : in our power  
 It is to send, but far beyond our power,  
 As being above our place, to promise you  
 Certificate or warrant.

## MARY STUART

Yet I trust  
 Consideration may be had of me  
 After my death, as one derived in blood  
 From your queen's grandsire, with all mortal rites  
 According with that faith I have professed  
 All my life-days as I was born therein.

This is the sum of all mine askings : whence  
Well might I take it in ill part of you  
To wish me seal my letter in your sight,  
Bewraying your hard opinion of me.

PAULET

This

Your own words well might put into my mind,  
That so beside my expectation made  
Proffer to take my first assay for me  
Of the outer part of it : for you must think  
I was not ignorant that by sleight of craft  
There might be as great danger so conveyed  
Within the letter as without, and thus  
I could not for ill thoughts of you be blamed,  
Concurring with you in this jealousy :  
For had yourself not moved it of yourself  
Sir Drew nor I had ever thought on it.

MARY STUART

The occasion why I moved it was but this,  
That having made my custom in time past  
To send sometimes some tokens to your queen,  
At one such time that I sent certain clothes  
One standing by advised her cause my gifts  
To be tried thoroughly ere she touched them ; which  
I have since observed, and taken order thus  
With Nau, when last he tarried at the court,  
To do the like to a fur-fringed counterpane  
Which at that time I sent : and as for this,  
Look what great danger lies between these leaves  
That I dare take and handle in my hands,  
And press against my face each part of them .

Held open thus, and either deadly side,  
Wherein your fear smells death sown privily.

PAULET

Madam, when so you charged your secretary  
Her majesty was far from doubt, I think,  
Or dream of such foul dealing : and I would  
Suspicion since had found no just cause given,  
And then things had not been as now they are.

MARY STUART

But things are as they are, and here I stand  
Convicted, and not knowing how many hours  
I have to live yet.

PAULET

Madam, you shall live  
As many hours as God shall please : but this  
May be said truly, that you here have been  
Convicted in most honourable sort  
And favourable.

MARY STUART

What favour have I found ?

PAULET

Your cause hath been examined scrupulously  
By many our eldest nobles of this realm,  
Whereas by law you should but have been tried  
By twelve men as a common person.

MARY STUART

Nay,  
Your noblemen must by their peers be tried.

PAULET

All strangers of what quality soe'er  
In matter of crime are only to be tried  
In other princes' territories by law  
That in that realm bears rule.

MARY STUART

You have your laws :  
But other princes all will think of it  
As they see cause ; and mine own son is now  
No more a child, but come to man's estate,  
And he will think of these things bitterly.

DRURY

Ingratitude, whate'er he think of them,  
Is odious in all persons, but of all  
In mightiest personages most specially  
Most hateful : and it will not be denied  
But that the queen's grace greatly hath deserved  
Both of yourself and of your son.

MARY STUART

What boon  
Shall I acknowledge? Being in bonds, I am set  
Free from the world, and therefore am I not  
Afraid to speak ; I have had the favour here  
To have been kept prisoner now these many years  
Against my will and justice.



PAULET

Madam, this  
Was a great favour, and without this grace  
You had not lived to see these days.

MARY STUART

How so?

PAULET

Seeing your own subjects did pursue you, and had  
The best in your own country.

MARY STUART

That is true,  
Because your Mildmay's ill persuasions first  
Made me discharge my forces, and then caused  
Mine enemies to burn my friends' main holds,  
Castles and houses.

PAULET

Howsoe'er, it was  
By great men of that country that the queen  
Had earnest suit made to her to have yourself  
Delivered to them, which her grace denied,  
And to their great misliking.

DRURY

Seventeen years  
She hath kept your life to save it : and whereas  
She calls your highness sister, she hath dealt  
In truth and deed most graciously with you  
And sisterlike, in seeking to preserve  
Your life at once and honour.

MARY STUART

Ay! wherein?

DRURY

In that commission of your causes held  
At York, which was at instance of your friends  
Dissolved to save your honour.

MARY STUART

No : the cause  
Why that commission was dissolved indeed  
Was that my friends could not be heard to inform  
Against my loud accusers.

PAULET

But your friend  
The bishop's self of Ross, your very friend,  
Hath written that this meeting was dismissed  
All only in your favour : and his book  
Is extant : and this favour is but one  
Of many graces which her majesty  
Hath for mere love extended to you.

MARY STUART

This  
Is one great favour, even to have kept me here  
So many years against my will.

PAULET

It was  
For your own safety, seeing your countrymen  
Sought your destruction, and to that swift end

Required to have you yielded up to them,  
As was before said.

MARY STUART

Nay, then, I will speak.  
I am not afraid. It was determined here  
That I should not depart : and when I was  
Demanded by my subjects, this I know,  
That my lord treasurer with his own close hand  
Writ in a packet which by trustier hands  
Was intercepted, and to me conveyed,  
To the earl of Murray, that the devil was tied  
Fast in a chain, and they could keep her not,  
But here she should be safely kept.

DRURY

That earl  
Was even as honourable a gentleman  
As I knew ever in that country bred.

MARY STUART

One of the worst men of the world he was :  
A foul adulterer, one of general lust,  
A spoiler and a murderer.

DRURY

Six weeks long,  
As I remember, here I saw him ; where  
He bore him very gravely, and maintained  
The reputation even on all men's tongues  
In all things of a noble gentleman :  
Nor have I heard him evil spoken of  
Till this time ever.

MARY STUART

Yea, my rebels here  
Are honest men, and by the queen have been  
Maintained.

PAULET

You greatly do forget yourself  
To charge her highness with so foul a fault,  
Which you can never find ability  
To prove on her.

MARY STUART

What did she with the French,  
I pray you, at Newhaven?

PAULET

It appears  
You have conceived so hardly of the queen  
My mistress, that you still inveterately  
Interpret all her actions to the worst,  
Not knowing the truth of all the cause : but yet  
I dare assure you that her majesty  
Had most just cause and righteous, in respect  
As well of Calais as for other ends,  
To do the thing she did, and more to have done,  
Had it so pleased her to put forth her power :  
And this is in you great unthankfulness  
After so many favours and so great,  
Whereof you will acknowledge in no wise  
The least of any : though her majesty  
Hath of her own grace merely saved your life,  
To the utter discontentment of the best  
Your subjects once in open parliament

Who craved against you justice on the charge  
Of civil law-breach and rebellion.

MARY STUART

I

Know no such matter, but full well I know  
Sir Francis Walsingham hath openly,  
Since his abiding last in Scotland, said  
That I should rue his entertainment there.

PAULET

Madam, you have not rued it, but have been  
More honourably entertained than ever yet  
Was any other crown's competitor  
In any realm save only this : whereof  
Some have been kept close prisoners, other some  
Maimed and unnaturally disfigured, some  
Murdered.

MARY STUART

But I was no competitor :  
All I required was in successive right  
To be reputed but as next the crown.

PAULET

Nay, madam, you went further, when you gave  
The English arms and style, as though our queen  
Had been but an usurper on your right.

MARY STUART

My husband and my kinsmen did therein  
What they thought good : I had nought to do with it.

PAULET

Why would you not then loyally renounce  
Your claim herein pretended, but with such  
Condition, that you might be authorized  
Next heir apparent to the crown?

MARY STUART

I have made  
At sundry times thereon good proffers, which  
Could never be accepted.

PAULET

Heretofore  
It hath been proved unto you presently  
That in the very instant even of all  
Your treaties and most friendlike offers were  
Some dangerous crafts discovered.

MARY STUART

You must think  
I have some friends on earth, and if they have done  
Anything privily, what is that to me?

PAULET

Madam, it was somewhat to you, and I would  
For your own sake you had forborne it, that  
After advertisement and conscience given  
Of Morgan's devilish practice, to have killed  
A sacred queen, you yet would entertain  
The murderer as your servant.

MARY STUART

I might do it  
With as good right as ever did your queen  
So entertain my rebels.

DRURY

Be advised :  
This speech is very hard, and all the case  
Here differs greatly.

MARY STUART

Yea, let this then be ;  
Ye cannot yet of my conviction say  
But I by partial judgment was condemned,  
And the commissioners knew my son could have  
No right, were I convicted, and your queen  
Could have no children of her womb ; whereby  
They might set up what man for king they would.

PAULET

This is in you too great forgetfulness  
Of honour and yourself, to charge these lords  
With two so foul and horrible faults, as first  
To take your life by partial doom from you,  
And then bestow the kingdom where they liked.

MARY STUART

Well, all is one to me : and for my part  
I thank God I shall die without regret  
Of anything that I have done alive.

PAULET

I would entreat you yet be sorry at least  
For the great wrong, and well deserving grief,  
You have done the queen my mistress.

MARY STUART

Nay, thereon

Let others answer for themselves : I have  
Nothing to do with it. Have you borne in mind  
Those matters of my monies that we last  
Conferred upon together ?

PAULET

Madam, these

Are not forgotten.

MARY STUART

Well it is if aught  
Be yet at all remembered for my good.  
Have here my letter sealed and superscribed,  
And so farewell—or even as here men may.

*[Exeunt PAULET and DRURY.]*

Had I that old strength in my weary limbs  
That in my heart yet fails not, fain would I  
Fare forth if not fare better. Tired I am,  
But not so lame in spirit I might not take  
Some comfort of the winter-wasted sun  
This bitter Christmas to me, though my feet  
Were now no firmer nor more helpful found  
Than when I went but in my chair abroad  
Last weary June at Chartley. I can stand  
And go now without help of either side,



And bend my hand again, thou seest, to write :  
I did not well perchance in sight of these  
To have made so much of this lame hand, which yet  
God knows was grievous to me, and to-day  
To make my letter up and superscribe  
And seal it with no outward show of pain  
Before their face and inquisition ; yet  
I care not much in player's wise piteously  
To blind such eyes with feigning : though this Drew  
Be gentler and more gracious than his mate  
And liker to be wrought on ; but at last  
What need have I of men ?

MARY BEATON

What then you may  
I know not, seeing for all that was and is  
We are yet not at the last ; but when you had,  
You have hardly failed to find more help of them  
And heartier service than more prosperous queens  
Exact of expectation : when your need  
Was greater than your name or natural state,  
And wage was none to look for but of death,  
As though the expectancy thereof and hope  
Were more than man's prosperities, men have given  
Heart's thanks to have this gift of God and you  
For dear life's guerdon, even the trust assured  
To drink for you the bitterness of death.

MARY STUART

Ay, one said once it must be—some one said  
I must be perilous ever, and my love  
More deadly than my will was evil or good  
Toward any of all these that through me should die—

I know not who, nor when one said it : but  
I know too sure he lied not.

MARY BEATON

No ; I think  
This was a seer indeed. I have heard of men  
That under imminence of death grew strong  
With mortal foresight, yet in life-days past  
Could see no foot before them, nor provide  
For their own fate or fortune anything  
Against one angry chance of accident  
Or passionate fault of their own loves or hates  
That might to death betray them : such an one  
Thus haply might have prophesied, and had  
No strength to save himself.

MARY STUART

I know not : yet  
Time was when I remembered.

MARY BEATON

It should be  
No enemy's saying whom you remember not ;  
You are wont not to forget your enemies ; yet  
The word rang sadder than a friend's should fall  
Save in some strange pass of the spirit or flesh  
For love's sake haply hurt to death.

MARY STUART

It seems  
Thy mind is bent to know the name of me  
That of myself I know not.

MARY BEATON

Nay, my mind  
Has other thoughts to beat upon : for me  
It may suffice to know the saying for true  
And never care who said it.

MARY STUART

True? too sure,  
God to mine heart's grief hath approved it. See,  
Nor Scot nor Englishman that takes on him  
The service of my sorrow but partakes  
The sorrow of my service : man by man,  
As that one said, they perish of me : yea,  
Were I a sword sent upon earth, or plague  
Bred of aerial poison, I could be  
No deadlier where unwillingly I strike,  
Who where I would can hurt not : Percy died  
By his own hand in prison, Howard by law,  
These young men with strange torments done to  
death,  
Who should have rid me and the world of her  
That is our scourge, and to the church of God  
A pestilence that wastes it : all the north  
Wears yet the scars engraven of civil steel  
Since its last rising : nay, she saith but right,  
Mine enemy, saying by these her servile tongues  
I have brought upon her land mine own land's curse,  
And a sword follows at my heel, and fire  
Is kindled of mine eyeshot : and before,  
Whom did I love that died not of it? whom  
That I would save might I deliver, when  
I had once but looked on him with love, or pledged

Friendship? I should have died I think long since,  
That many might have died not, and this word  
Had not been written of me nor fulfilled,  
But perished in the saying, a prophecy  
That took the prophet by the throat and slew—  
As sure I think it slew him. Such a song  
Might my poor servant slain before my face  
Have sung before the stroke of violent death  
Had fallen upon him there for my sake.

MARY BEATON

Ah!

You think so? this remembrance was it not  
That hung and hovered in your mind but now,  
Moved your heart backward all unwittingly  
To some blind memory of the man long dead?

MARY STUART

In sooth, I think my prophet should have been  
David.

MARY BEATON

You thought of him?

MARY STUART

An old sad thought :

The moan of it was made long since, and he  
Not unremembered.

MARY BEATON

Nay, of him indeed  
Record was made—a royal record : whence  
No marvel is it that you forgot not him.

## MARY STUART

I would forget no friends nor enemies : these  
More needs me now remember. Think'st thou not  
This woman hates me deadlier—or this queen  
That is not woman—than myself could hate  
Except I were as she in all things ? then  
I should love no such woman as am I  
Much more than she may love me : yet I am sure,  
Or so near surety as all belief may be,  
She dare not slay me for her soul's sake : nay,  
Though that were made as light of as a leaf  
Storm-shaken, in such stormy winds of state  
As blow between us like a blast of death,  
For her throne's sake she durst not, which must be  
Broken to build my scaffold. Yet, God wot,  
Perchance a straw's weight now cast in by chance  
Might weigh my life down in the scale her hand  
Holds hardly straight for trembling : if she be  
Woman at all, so tempered naturally  
And with such spirit and sense as thou and I,  
Should I for wrath so far forget myself  
As these men sometime charge me that I do,  
My tongue might strike my head off. By this head  
That yet I wear to swear by, if life be  
Thankworthy, God might well be thanked for this  
Of me or whoso loves me in the world,  
That I spake never half my heart out yet,  
For any sore temptation of them all,  
To her or hers ; nor ever put but once  
My heart upon my paper, writing plain  
The things I thought, heard, knew for truth of her,  
Believed or feigned—nay, feigned not to believe  
Of her fierce follies fed with wry-mouthed praise,

And that vain ravin of her sexless lust  
Which could not feed nor hide its hunger, curb  
With patience nor allay with love the thirst  
That mocked itself as all mouths mocked it. Ha,  
What might the reading of these truths have  
wrought

Within her maiden mind, what seed have sown,  
Trow'st thou, in her sweet spirit, of revenge  
Toward me that showed her queenship in the glass  
A subject's hand of hers had put in mine  
The likeness of it loathed and laughable  
As they that worshipped it with words and signs  
Beheld her and bemocked her?

MARY BEATON

Certainly,  
I think that soul drew never breath alive  
To whom this letter might seem pardonable  
Which timely you forbore to send her.

MARY STUART

Nay,  
I doubt not I did well to keep it back—  
And did not ill to write it: for God knows  
It was no small ease to my heart.

MARY BEATON

But say  
I had not burnt it as you bade me burn,  
But kept it privily safe against a need  
That I might haply sometime have of it?

MARY STUART

What, to destroy me?

MARY BEATON

Hardly, sure, to save.

MARY STUART

Why shouldst thou think to bring me to my death?

MARY BEATON

Indeed, no man am I that love you ; nor  
Need I go therefore in such fear of you  
As of my mortal danger.

MARY STUART

On my life,  
(Long life or short, with gentle or violent end,  
I know not, and would choose not, though I might  
So take God's office on me) one that heard  
Would swear thy speech had in it, and subtly mixed,  
A savour as of menace, or a sound  
As of an imminent ill or perilous sense  
Which was not in thy meaning.

MARY BEATON

No : in mine  
There lurked no treason ever ; nor have you  
Cause to think worse of me than loyalty,  
If proof may be believed on witness.

MARY STUART

Sure,  
I think I have not nor I should not have :

Thy life has been the shadow cast of mine,  
A present faith to serve my present need,  
A foot behind my footsteps ; as long since  
In those French dances that we trod, and laughed  
The blithe way through together. Thou couldst sing  
Then, and a great while gone it is by this  
Since I heard song or music : I could now  
Find in my heart to bid thee, as the Jews  
Were once bid sing in their captivity  
One of their songs of Sion, sing me now,  
If one thou knowest, for love of that far time,  
One of our songs of Paris.

## MARY BEATON

Give me leave  
A little to cast up some wandering words  
And gather back such memories as may beat  
About my mind of such a song, and yet  
I think I might renew some note long dumb  
That once your ear allowed of.—I did pray, [*Aside.*  
Tempt me not, God : and by her mouth again  
He tempts me—nay, but prompts me, being most just,  
To know by trial if all remembrance be  
Dead as remorse or pity that in birth  
Died, and were childless in her : if she quite  
Forget that very swan-song of thy love,  
My love that wast, my love that wouldst not be,  
Let God forget her now at last as I  
Remember : if she think but one soft thought,  
Cast one poor word upon thee, God thereby  
Shall surely bid me let her live : if none,  
I shoot that letter home and sting her dead.



God strengthen me to sing but these words through  
Though I fall dumb at end for ever. Now—

[*She sings.*

Après tant de jours, après tant de pleurs,  
Soyez secourable à mon âme en peine.  
Voyez comme Avril fait l'amour aux fleurs ;  
Dame d'amour, dame aux belles couleurs,  
Dieu vous a fait belle, Amour vous fait reine.

Rions, je t'en prie ; aimons, je le veux.  
Le temps fuit et rit et ne revient guère  
Pour baiser le bout de tes blonds cheveux,  
Pour baiser tes cils, ta bouche et tes yeux ;  
L'amour n'a qu'un jour auprès de sa mère.

MARY STUART

Nay, I should once have known that song, thou say'st,  
And him that sang it and should now be dead :  
Was it—but his rang sweeter—was it not  
Remy Belleau ?

MARY BEATON

(My letter—here at heart !) [*Aside.*  
I think it might be—were it better writ  
And courtlier phrased, with Latin spice cast in,  
And a more tunable descant.

MARY STUART

Ay ; how sweet  
Sang all the world about those stars that sang  
With Ronsard for the strong mid star of all,  
His bay-bound head all glorious with grey hairs,  
Who sang my birth and bridal ! When I think

Of those French years, I only seem to see  
A light of swords and singing, only hear  
Laughter of love and lovely stress of lutes,  
And in between the passion of them borne  
Sounds of swords crossing ever, as of feet  
Dancing, and life and death still equally  
Blithe and bright-eyed from battle. Haply now  
My sometime sister, mad Queen Madge, is grown  
As grave as I should be, and wears at waist  
No hearts of last year's lovers any more  
Enchased for jewels round her girdlestead,  
But rather beads for penitence ; yet I doubt  
Time should not more abash her heart than mine,  
Who live not heartless yet. These days like those  
Have power but for a season given to do  
No more upon our spirits than they may,  
And what they may we know not till it be  
Done, and we need no more take thought of it,  
As I no more of death or life to-day.

MARY BEATON

That shall you surely need not.

MARY STUART

So I think,  
Our keepers being departed : and by these,  
Even by the uncourtlier as the gentler man,  
I read as in a glass their queen's plain heart,  
And that by her at last I shall not die.

SCENE III. *Greenwich Palace*QUEEN ELIZABETH *and* DAVISON

ELIZABETH

Thou hast seen Lord Howard? I bade him send thee.

DAVISON

Madam,

But now he came upon me hard at hand  
And by your gracious message bade me in.

ELIZABETH

The day is fair as April : hast thou been  
Abroad this morning? 'Tis no winter's sun  
That makes these trees forget their nakedness  
And all the glittering ground, as 'twere in hope,  
Breathe laughingly.

DAVISON

Indeed, the gracious air  
Had drawn me forth into the park, and thence  
Comes my best speed to attend upon your grace.

ELIZABETH

My grace is not so gracious as the sun  
That graces thus the late distempered air :  
And you should oftener use to walk abroad,  
Sir, than your custom is : I would not have  
Good servants heedless of their natural health

To do me sickly service. It were strange  
That one twice bound as woman and as queen  
To care for good men's lives and loyalties  
Should prove herself toward either dangerous.

DAVISON

That

Can be no part of any servant's fear  
Who lives for service of your majesty.

ELIZABETH

I would not have it be—God else forbid—  
Who have so loyal servants as I hold  
All now that bide about me : for I will not  
Think, though such villainy once were in men's minds,  
That twice among mine English gentlemen  
Shall hearts be found so foul as theirs who thought,  
When I was horsed for hunting, to waylay  
And shoot me through the back at unawares  
With poisoned bullets : nor, thou knowest, would I,  
When this was opened to me, take such care,  
Ride so fenced round about with iron guard,  
Or walk so warily as men counselled me  
For loyal fear of what thereafter might  
More prosperously be plotted : nay, God knows,  
I would not hold on such poor terms my life,  
With such a charge upon it, as to breathe  
In dread of death or treason till the day  
That they should stop my trembling breath, and ease  
The piteous heart that panted like a slave's  
Of all vile fear for ever. So to live  
Were so much hatefuller than thus to die,  
I do not think that man or woman draws

Base breath of life the loathsome on earth  
Who by such purchase of perpetual fear  
And deathless doubt of all in trust of none  
Would shudderingly prolong it.

DAVISON

Even too well  
Your servants know that greatness of your heart  
Which gives you yet unguarded to men's eyes,  
And were unworthier found to serve or live  
Than is the unworthiest of them, did not this  
Make all their own hearts hotter with desire  
To be the bulwark or the price of yours  
Paid to redeem it from the arrest of death.

ELIZABETH

So haply should they be whose hearts beat true  
With loyal blood: but whoso says they are  
Is but a loving liar.

DAVISON

I trust your grace  
Hath in your own heart no such doubt of them  
As speaks in mockery through your lips.

ELIZABETH

By God,  
I say much less than righteous truth might speak  
Of their loud loves that ring with emptiness,  
And hollow-throated loyalties whose heart  
Is wind and clamorous promise. Ye desire,  
With all your souls ye swear that ye desire  
The queen of Scots were happily removed,

And not a knave that loves me will put hand  
To the enterprise ye look for only of me  
Who only would forbear it.

DAVISON

  If your grace  
Be minded yet it shall be done at all,  
The way that were most honourable and just  
Were safest, sure, and best.

ELIZABETH

  I dreamt last night  
Our murderess there in hold had tasted death  
By execution of the sentence done  
That was pronounced upon her ; and the news  
So stung my heart with wrath to hear of it  
That had I had a sword—look to 't, and 'ware !—  
I had thrust it through thy body.

DAVISON

  God defend !  
'Twas well I came not in your highness' way  
While the hot mood was on you. But indeed  
I would know soothly if your mind be changed  
From its late root of purpose.

ELIZABETH

  No, by God :  
But I were fain it could be somewise done  
And leave the blame not on me. And so much,  
If there were love and honesty in one  
Whom I held faithful and exact of care,  
Should easily be performed ; but here I find

This dainty fellow so precise a knave  
As will take all things dangerous on his tongue  
And nothing on his hand : hot-mouthed and large  
In zeal to stuff mine ears with promises,  
But perjurous in performance : did he not  
Set hand among you to the bond whereby  
He is bound at utmost hazard of his life  
To do me such a service? Yet I could  
Have wrought as well without him, had I wist  
Of this faint falsehood in his heart : there is  
That Wingfield whom thou wot'st of, would have done  
With glad goodwill what I required of him,  
And made no Puritan mouths on 't.

DAVISON

Madam, yet

Far better were it all should but be done  
By line of law and judgment.

ELIZABETH

There be men

Wiser than thou that see this otherwise.

DAVISON

All is not wisdom that of wise men comes,  
Nor are all eyes that search the ways of state  
Clear as a just man's conscience.

ELIZABETH

Proverbs ! ha ?

Who made thee master of these sentences,  
Prime tongue of ethics and philosophy ?

DAVISON

An honest heart to serve your majesty  
Nought else nor subtler in its reach of wit  
Than very simpleness of meaning.

ELIZABETH

Nay,

I do believe thee ; heartily I do.  
Did my lord admiral not desire thee bring  
The warrant for her execution ?

DAVISON

Ay,

Madam ; here is it.

ELIZABETH

I would it might not be,  
Or being so just were yet not necessary.  
Art thou not heartily sorry—wouldst thou not,  
I say, be sad—to see me sign it ?

DAVISON

Madam,

I grieve at any soul's mishap that lives,  
And specially for shipwreck of a life  
To you so near allied : but seeing this doom  
Wrung forth from justice by necessity,  
I had rather guilt should bleed than innocence.

ELIZABETH

When I shall sign, take thou this instantly  
To the lord chancellor ; see it straight be sealed



As quietly as he may, not saying a word,  
That no man come to know it untimely : then  
Send it to the earls of Kent and Shrewsbury  
Who are here set down to see this justice done :  
I would no more be troubled with this coil  
Till all be through. But, for the place of doom,  
The hall there of the castle, in my mind,  
Were fitter than the court or open green.  
And as thou goest betake thee on thy way  
To Walsingham, where he lies sick at home,  
And let him know what hath of us been done :  
Whereof the grief, I fear me, shall go near  
To kill his heart outright.

DAVISON

Your majesty  
Hath yet not signed the warrant.

ELIZABETH

Ha ! God's blood !  
Art thou from tutor of philosophy late  
Grown counsellor too and more than counsellor, thou  
To appoint me where and what this hand of mine  
Shall at thy beck obsequiously subscribe  
And follow on thy finger ? By God's death,  
What if it please me now not sign at all ?  
This letter of my kinswoman's last writ  
Hath more compulsion in it, and more power  
To enforce my pity, than a thousand tongues  
Dictating death against her in mine ear  
Of mine own vassal subjects. Here but now  
She writes me she thanks God with all her heart  
That it hath pleased him by the mean of me

To make an end of her life's pilgrimage,  
Which hath been weary to her : and doth not ask  
To see its length drawn longer, having had  
Too much experience of its bitterness :  
But only doth entreat me, since she may  
Look for no favour at their zealous hands  
Who are first in councils of my ministry,  
That only I myself will grant her prayers ;  
Whereof the first is, since she cannot hope  
For English burial with such Catholic rites  
As here were used in time of the ancient kings,  
Mine ancestors and hers, and since the tombs  
Lie violated in Scotland of her sires,  
That so soon ever as her enemies  
Shall with her innocent blood be satiated,  
Her body by her servants may be borne  
To some ground consecrated, there to be  
Interred : and rather, she desires, in France,  
Where sleep her honoured mother's ashes ; so  
At length may her poor body find the rest  
Which living it has never known : thereto,  
She prays me, from the fears she hath of those  
To whose harsh hand I have abandoned her,  
She may not secretly be done to death,  
But in her servants' sight and others', who  
May witness her obedience kept and faith  
To the true church, and guard her memory safe  
From slanders haply to be blown abroad  
Concerning her by mouths of enemies : last,  
She asks that her attendants, who so well  
And faithfully through all her miseries past  
Have served her, may go freely where they please,  
And lose not those small legacies of hers  
Which poverty can yet bequeath to them.

This she conjures me by the blood of Christ,  
Our kinship, and my grandsire's memory,  
Who was her father's grandsire and a king,  
And by the name of queen she bears with her  
Even to the death, that I will not refuse,  
And that a word in mine own hand may thus  
Assure her, who will then as she hath lived  
Die mine affectionate sister and prisoner. See,  
Howe'er she have sinned, what heart were mine, if  
this

Drew no tears from me : not the meanest soul  
That lives most miserable but with such words  
Must needs draw down men's pity.

## DAVISON

Sure it is,

This queen hath skill of writing : and her hand  
Hath manifold eloquence with various voice  
To express discourse of sirens or of snakes,  
A mermaid's or a monster's, uttering best  
All music or all malice. Here is come  
A letter writ long since of hers to you  
From Sheffield Castle, which for shame or fear  
She durst not or she would not thence despatch,  
Sent secretly to me from Fotheringay,  
Not from her hand, but with her own hand writ,  
So foul of import and malignity  
I durst not for your majesty's respect  
With its fierce infamies afire from hell  
Offend your gracious eyesight : but because  
Your justice by your mercy's ignorant hand  
Hath her fair eyes put out, and walks now blind  
Even by the pit's edge deathward, pardon me

If what you never should have seen be shown  
By hands that rather would take fire in hand  
Than lay in yours this writing. [*Gives her a letter.*]

## ELIZABETH

By this light,  
Whate'er be here, thou hadst done presumptuously,  
And Walsingham thy principal, to keep  
Aught from mine eyes that being to me designed  
Might even with most offence enlighten them.  
Here is her hand indeed ; and she takes up [*Reading.*]  
In gracious wise enough the charge imposed  
By promise on her and desire of ours,  
How loth soe'er she be, regretfully  
To bring such things in question of discourse,  
Yet with no passion but sincerity,  
As God shall witness her, declares to us  
What our good lady of Shrewsbury said to her  
Touching ourself in terms ensuing ; whereto  
Answering she chid this dame for such belief,  
And reprehended for licentious tongue,  
To speak so lewdly of us : which herself  
Believes not, knowing the woman's natural heart  
And evil will as then to usward. Here  
She writes no more than I would well believe  
Of her as of the countess. Ha !

## DAVISON

Your grace  
Shall but defile and vex your eyes and heart  
To read these villainies through.

## ELIZABETH

God's death, man ! peace :  
Thou wert not best incense me toward thine own,  
Whose eyes have been before me in them. What !  
Was she not mad to write this? *One that had*  
*Your promise—lay with you times numberless—*  
*All license and all privateness that may*  
*Be used of wife and husband !* yea, of her  
And more dead men than shame remembers. *God*  
*Shall stand her witness—with the devil of hell*  
For sponsor to her vows, whose spirit in her  
Begot himself this issue. Ha, the duke !  
—Nay, God shall give me patience—and his knave,  
And Hatton—God have mercy ! nay, but hate,  
Hate and constraint and rage have wrecked her wits,  
And continence of life cut off from lust,  
—This common stale of Scotland, that has tried  
The sins of three rank nations, and consumed  
Their veins whose life she took not—Italy,  
France that put half this poison in her blood,  
And her own kingdom that being sick therewith  
Vomited out on ours the venomous thing  
Whose head we set not foot on—but may God  
Make my fame fouler through the world than hers  
And ranker in men's record, if I spare  
The she-wolf that I saved, the woman-beast,  
Wolf-woman—how the Latin rings we know,  
And what lewd lair first reared her, and whose hand  
Writ broad across the Louvre and Holyrood  
*Lupanar*—but no brothel ever bred  
Or breathed so rank a soul's infection, spawned  
Or spat such foulness in God's face and man's  
Or festered in such falsehood as her breath

Strikes honour sick with, and the spirit of shame  
Dead as her fang shall strike herself, and send  
The serpent that corruption calls her soul  
To vie strange venoms with the worm of hell  
And make the face of darkness and the grave  
Blush hotter with the fires wherein that soul  
Sinks deeper than damnation.

## DAVISON

Let your grace  
Think only that but now the thing is known  
And self-discovered which too long your love  
Too dangerously hath cherished ; and forget  
All but that end which yet remains for her,  
That right by pity be not overcome.

## ELIZABETH

God pity so my soul as I do right,  
And show me no more grace alive or dead  
Than I do justice here. Give me again  
That warrant I put by, being foolish : yea,  
Thy word spake sooth—my soul's eyes were put  
out—  
I could not see for pity. Thou didst well—  
I am bounden to thee heartily—to cure  
My sight of this distemper, and my soul.  
Here in God's sight I set mine hand, who thought  
Never to take this thing upon it, nor  
Do God so bitter service. Take this hence :  
And let me see no word nor hear of her  
Till the sun see not such a soul alive.

ACT V

MARY STUART

SCENE I. *Mary's Chamber in Fotheringay Castle*

MARY STUART *and* MARY BEATON.

MARY STUART

[*Sings.*

O Lord my God,  
I have trusted in thee ;  
O Jesu my dearest one,  
Now set me free.  
In prison's oppression,  
In sorrow's obsession,  
I weary for thee.  
With sighing and crying  
Bowed down as dying,  
I adore thee, I implore thee, set me free !

FREE are the dead : yet fain I would have had  
Once, before all captivity find end,  
Some breath of freedom living. These that come,  
I think, with no such message, must not find,  
For all this lameness of my limbs, a heart  
As maimed in me with sickness. Three years gone,

When last I parted from the earl marshal's charge,  
I did not think to see his face again  
Turned on me as his prisoner. Now his wife  
Will take no jealousy more to hear of it,  
I trust, albeit we meet not as unfriends,  
If it be mortal news he brings me. Go,  
If I seem ready, as meseems I should,  
And well arrayed to bear myself indeed  
None otherwise than queenlike in their sight,  
Bid them come in. [Exit MARY BEATON.

I cannot tell at last  
If it be fear or hope that should expect  
Death: I have had enough of hope, and fear  
Was none of my familiars while I lived  
Such life as had more pleasant things to lose  
Than death or life may now divide me from.  
'Tis not so much to look upon the sun  
With eyes that may not lead us where we will,  
And halt behind the footless flight of hope  
With feet that may not follow: nor were aught  
So much, of all things life may think to have,  
That one not cowardly born should find it worth  
The purchase of so base a price as this,  
To stand self-shamed as coward. I do not think  
This is mine end that comes upon me: but  
I had liefer far it were than, were it not,  
That ever I should fear it.

*Enter KENT, SHREWSBURY, BEALE, and Sheriff*

Sirs, good day:  
With such good heart as prisoners have, I bid  
You and your message welcome.



KENT

Madam, this  
The secretary of the council here hath charge  
To read as their commission.

MARY STUART

Let me hear  
In as brief wise as may beseem the time  
The purport of it.

BEALE

Our commission here  
Given by the council under the great seal  
Pronounces on your head for present doom  
Death, by this written sentence.

MARY STUART

Ay, my lords?  
May I believe this, and not hold myself  
Mocked as a child with shadows? In God's name,  
Speak you, my lord of Shrewsbury: let me know  
If this be dream or waking.

KENT

Verily,  
No dream it is, nor dreamers we that pray,  
Madam, you meetly would prepare yourself  
To stand before God's judgment presently.

MARY STUART

I had rather so than ever stand again  
Before the face of man's. Why speak not you,

To whom I speak, my lord earl marshal? Nay,  
Look not so heavily: by my life, he stands  
As one at point to weep. Why, good my lord,  
To know that none may swear by Mary's life  
And hope again to find belief of man  
Upon so slight a warrant, should not bring  
This trouble on your eyes; look up, and say  
The word you have for her that never was  
Less than your friend, and prisoner.

## SHREWSBURY

None save this,  
Which willingly I would not speak, I may;  
That presently your time is come to die.

## MARY STUART

Why, then, I am well content to leave a world  
Wherein I am no more serviceable at all  
To God or man, and have therein so long  
Endured so much affliction. All my life  
I have ever earnestly desired the love  
And friendship of your queen; have warned her oft  
Of coming dangers; and have cherished long  
The wish that I but once might speak with her  
In plain-souled confidence; being well assured,  
Had we but once met, there an end had been  
Of jealousies between us: but our foes,  
With equal wrong toward either, treacherously  
Have kept us still in sunder: by whose craft  
And crooked policy hath my sister's crown  
Fallen in great peril, and myself have been  
Imprisoned, and inveterately maligned,  
And here must now be murdered. But I know

That only for my faith's sake I must die,  
And this to know for truth is recompense  
As large as all my sufferings. For the crime  
Wherewith I am charged, upon this holy book  
I lay mine hand for witness of my plea,  
I am wholly ignorant of it ; and solemnly  
Declare that never yet conspiracy  
Devised against the queen my sister's life  
Took instigation or assent from me.

KENT

You swear but on a popish Testament :  
Such oaths are all as worthless as the book.

MARY STUART

I swear upon the book wherein I trust :  
Would you give rather credit to mine oath  
Sworn on your scriptures that I trust not in ?

KENT

Madam, I fain would have you heartily  
Renounce your superstition ; toward which end  
With us the godly dean of Peterborough,  
Good Richard Fletcher, well approved for faith  
Of God and of the queen, is hither come  
To proffer you his prayerful ministry.

MARY STUART

If you, my lords, or he will pray for me,  
I shall be thankful for your prayers ; but may not  
With theirs that hold another faith mix mine.

I pray you therefore that mine almoner may  
Have leave to attend on me, that from his hands  
I, having made confession, may receive  
The sacrament.

**KENT**

**We may not grant you this.**

## MARY STUART

I shall not see my chaplain ere I die?  
But two months gone this grace was granted me  
By word expressly from your queen, to have  
Again his ministration : and at last  
In the utter hour and bitter strait of death  
Is this denied me?

**KENT**

Madam, for your soul  
More meet it were to cast these mummeries out,  
And bear Christ only in your heart, than serve  
With ceremonies of ritual hand and tongue  
His mere idolatrous likeness.

## MARY STUART

This were strange,

That I should bear him visible in my hand  
Or keep with lips and knees his titular rites  
And cast in heart no thought upon him. Nay,  
Put me, I pray, to no more argument :  
But if this least thing be not granted, yet  
Grant me to know the season of my death.

## SHREWSBURY

At eight by dawn to-morrow you must die.

## MARY STUART

So shall I hardly see the sun again.  
By dawn to-morrow? meanest men condemned  
Give not their lives' breath up so suddenly :  
Howbeit, I had rather yield you thanks, who make  
Such brief end of the bitterness of death  
For me who have borne such bitter length of life,  
Than plead with protestation of appeal  
For half a piteous hour's remission : nor  
Henceforward shall I be denied of man  
Aught, who may never now crave aught again  
But whence is no denial. Yet shall this  
Not easily be believed of men, nor find  
In foreign ears acceptance, that a queen  
Should be thrust out of life thus. Good my friend,  
Bid my physician Gorion come to me :  
I have to speak with him—sirs, with your leave—  
Of certain monies due to me in France.  
What, shall I twice desire your leave, my lords,  
To live these poor last hours of mine alive  
At peace among my friends? I have much to do,  
And little time wherein to do it is left.

SHREWSBURY      [*To KENT apart.*

I pray she may not mean worse than I would  
Against herself ere morning.

KENT

Let not then  
This French knave's drugs come near her, nor himself :  
We will take order for it.

SHREWSBURY

Nay, this were but  
To exasperate more her thwarted heart, and make  
Despair more desperate than itself. Pray God  
She be not minded to compel us put  
Force at the last upon her of men's hands  
To hale her violently to death, and make  
Judgment look foul and fierce as murder's face  
With stain of strife and passion.

*[Exeunt all but MARY STUART and MARY BEATON.]*

MARY STUART

So, my friend,  
The last of all our Maries are you left  
To-morrow. Strange has been my life, and now  
Strange looks my death upon me : yet, albeit  
Nor the hour nor manner of it be mine to choose,  
Ours is it yet, and all men's in the world,  
To make death welcome in what wise we will.  
Bid you my chaplain, though he see me not,  
Watch through the night and pray for me : perchance,  
When ere the sundawn they shall bring me forth,  
I may behold him, and upon my knees  
Receive his blessing. Let our supper be  
Served earlier in than wont was : whereunto  
I bid my true poor servants here, to take

Farewell and drink at parting to them all  
The cup of my last kindness, in good hope  
They shall stand alway constant in their faith  
And dwell in peace together : thereupon  
What little store is left me will I share  
Among them, and between my girls divide  
My wardrobe and my jewels severally,  
Reserving but the black robe and the red  
That shall attire me for my death : and last  
With mine own hand shall be my will writ out  
And all memorials more set down therein  
That I would leave for legacies of love  
To my next kinsmen and my household folk.  
And to the king my brother yet of France  
Must I write briefly, but a word to say  
I am innocent of the charge whereon I die  
Now for my right's sake claimed upon this crown,  
And our true faith's sake, but am barred from sight  
Even of mine almoner here, though hard at hand ;  
And I would bid him take upon his charge  
The keeping of my servants, as I think  
He shall not for compassionate shame refuse,  
Albeit his life be softer than his heart ;  
And in religion for a queen's soul pray  
That once was styled Most Christian, and is now  
In the true faith about to die, deprived  
Of all her past possessions. But this most  
And first behoves it, that the king of Spain  
By Gorion's word of mouth receive my heart,  
Who soon shall stand before him. Bid the leech  
Come hither, and alone, to speak with me.

[*Exit* MARY BEATON.

She is dumb as death : yet never in her life  
Hath she been quick of tongue. For all the rest,

Poor souls, how well they love me, all as well  
I think I know : and one of them or twain  
At least may surely see me to my death  
Ere twice the hours have changed again. Perchance  
Love that can weep not would the gladlier die  
For those it cannot weep on. Time wears thin :  
They should not now play laggard : nay, he comes,  
The last that ever speaks alone with me  
Before my soul shall speak alone with God.

*Enter GORION*

I have sent once more for you to no such end  
As sick men for physicians : no strong drug  
May put the death next morning twelve hours back  
Whose twilight overshadows me, that am  
Nor sick nor medicinable. Let me know  
If I may lay the last of all my trust  
On you that ever shall be laid on man  
To prove him kind and loyal.

GORION

So may God  
Deal with me, madam, as I prove to you  
Faithful, though none but I were in the world  
That you might trust beside.

MARY STUART

With equal heart  
Do I believe and thank you. I would send  
To Paris for the ambassador from Spain  
This letter with two diamonds, which your craft



For me must cover from men's thievish eyes  
Where they may be not looked for.

GORION

Easily  
Within some molten drug may these be hid,  
And faithfully by me conveyed to him.

MARY STUART

The lesser of them shall he keep in sign  
Of my good friendship toward himself : but this  
In token to King Philip shall he give  
That for the truth I die, and dying commend  
To him my friends and servants, Gilbert Curle,  
His sister, and Jane Kennedy, who shall  
To-night watch by me ; and my ladies all  
That have endured my prison : let him not  
Forget from his good favour one of these  
That I remember to him : Charles Arundel,  
And either banished Paget ; one whose heart  
Was better toward my service than his hand,  
Morgan : and of mine exiles for their faith,  
The prelates first of Glasgow and of Ross ;  
And Liggon and Throgmorton, that have lost  
For me their leave to live on English earth ;  
And Westmoreland, that lives now more forlorn  
Than died that earl who rose for me with him.  
These I beseech him favour for my sake  
Still : and forget not, if he come again  
To rule as king in England, one of them  
That were mine enemies here : the treasurer first,  
And Leicester, Walsingham, and Huntingdon,  
At Tutbury once my foe, fifteen years gone,

And Wade that spied upon me three years since,  
And Paulet here my gaoler : set them down  
For him to wreak wrath's utmost justice on,  
In my revenge remembered. Though I be  
Dead, let him not forsake his hope to reign  
Upon this people : with my last breath left  
I make this last prayer to him, that not the less  
He will maintain the invasion yet designed  
Of us before on England : let him think,  
It is God's quarrel, and on earth a cause  
Well worthy of his greatness : which being won,  
Let him forget no man of these nor me.  
And now will I lie down, that four hours' sleep  
May give me strength before I sleep again  
And need take never thought for waking more.

SCENE II. *The Presence Chamber*

SHREWSBURY, KENT, PAULET, DRURY, MELVILLE,  
*and Attendants*

KENT

The stroke is past of eight.

SHREWSBURY

Not far, my lord.

KENT

What stays the provost and the sheriff yet  
That went ere this to bring the prisoner forth ?  
What, are her doors locked inwards ? then perchance

Our last night's auguries of some close design  
By death contrived of her self-slaughterous hand  
To baffle death by justice hit but right  
The heart of her bad purpose.

## SHREWSBURY

Fear it not :

See where she comes, a queenlier thing to see  
Than whom such thoughts take hold on.

*Enter MARY STUART, led by two gentlemen and preceded by the Sheriff; MARY BEATON, BARBARA MOWBRAY, and other ladies behind, who remain in the doorway*

MELVILLE (*kneeling to MARY*)

Woe am I,

Madam, that I must bear to Scotland back  
Such tidings watered with such tears as these.

## MARY STUART

Weep not, good Melville : rather should your heart  
Rejoice that here an end is come at last  
Of Mary Stuart's long sorrows ; for be sure  
That all this world is only vanity.  
And this record I pray you make of me,  
That a true woman to my faith I die,  
And true to Scotland and to France : but God  
Forgive them that have long desired mine end  
And with false tongues have thirsted for my blood  
As the hart thirsteth for the water-brooks.  
O God, who art truth, and the author of all truth,

Thou knowest the extreme recesses of my heart,  
And how that I was willing all my days  
That England should with Scotland be fast friends.  
Commend me to my son : tell him that I  
Have nothing done to prejudice his rights  
As king : and now, good Melville, fare thee well.  
My lord of Kent, whence comes it that your charge  
Hath bidden back my women there at door  
Who fain to the end would bear me company ?

## KENT

Madam, this were not seemly nor discreet,  
That these should so have leave to vex men's ears  
With cries and loose lamentings : haply too  
They might in superstition seek to dip  
Their handkerchiefs for relics in your blood.

## MARY STUART

That will I pledge my word they shall not. Nay,  
The queen would surely not deny me this,  
The poor last thing that I shall ask on earth.  
Even a far meaner person dying I think  
She would not have so handled. Sir, you know  
I am her cousin, of her grandsire's blood,  
A queen of France by marriage, and by birth  
Anointed queen of Scotland. My poor girls  
Desire no more than but to see me die.

## SHREWSBURY

Madam, you have leave to elect of this your train  
Two ladies with four men to go with you.

## MARY STUART

I choose from forth my Scottish following here  
Jane Kennedy, with Elspeth Curle : of men,  
Bourgoin and Gorion shall attend on me,  
Gervais and Didier. Come then, let us go.

[*Exeunt : manent* MARY BEATON and BARBARA  
MOWBRAY.

## BARBARA

I wist I was not worthy, though my child  
It is that her own hands made Christian : but  
I deemed she should have bid you go with her.  
Alas, and would not all we die with her ?

## MARY BEATON

Why, from the gallery here at hand your eyes  
May go with her along the hall beneath  
Even to the scaffold : and I fain would hear  
What fain I would not look on. Pray you, then,  
If you may bear to see it as those below,  
Do me that sad good service of your eyes  
For mine to look upon it, and declare  
All that till all be done I will not see ;  
I pray you of your pity.

## BARBARA

Though mine heart  
Break, it shall not for fear forsake the sight  
That may be faithful yet in following her,  
Nor yet for grief refuse your prayer, being fain

To give your love such bitter comfort, who  
So long have never left her.

MARY BEATON

Till she die—  
I have ever known I shall not till she die.  
See you yet aught? if I hear spoken words,  
My heart can better bear these pulses, else  
Unbearable, that rend it.

BARBARA

Yea, I see  
Stand in mid' hall the scaffold, black as death,  
And black the block upon it : all around,  
Against the throng a guard of halberdiers ;  
And the axe against the scaffold-rail reclined,  
And two men masked on either hand beyond :  
And hard behind the block a cushion set,  
Black, as the chair behind it.

MARY BEATON

When I saw  
Fallen on a scaffold once a young man's head,  
Such things as these I saw not. Nay, but on :  
I knew not that I spake : and toward your ears  
Indeed I spake not.

BARBARA

All those faces change ;  
She comes more royally than ever yet  
Fell foot of man triumphant on this earth,  
Imperial more than empire made her, born

Enthroned as queen sat never. Not a line  
Stirs of her sovereign feature : like a bride  
Brought home she mounts the scaffold ; and her eyes  
Sweep regal round the cirque beneath, and rest,  
Subsiding with a smile. She sits, and they,  
The doomsmen earls, beside her ; at her left  
The sheriff, and the clerk at hand on high,  
To read the warrant.

MARY BEATON

None stands there but knows  
What things therein are writ against her : God  
Knows what therein is writ not. God forgive  
All.

BARBARA

Not a face there breathes of all the throng  
But is more moved than hers to hear this read,  
Whose look alone is changed not.

MARY BEATON

Once I knew  
A face that changed not in as dire an hour  
More than the queen's face changes. Hath he not  
Ended?

BARBARA

You cannot hear them speak below :  
Come near and hearken ; bid not me repeat  
All.

MARY BEATON

I beseech you—for I may not come.

## BARBARA

Now speaks Lord Shrewsbury but a word or twain,  
And brieflier yet she answers, and stands up  
As though to kneel, and pray.

## MARY BEATON

I too have prayed—  
God hear at last her prayers not less than mine,  
Which failed not, sure, of hearing.

## BARBARA

Now draws nigh  
That heretic priest, and bows himself, and thrice  
Strives, as a man that sleeps in pain, to speak,  
Stammering : she waves him by, as one whose prayers  
She knows may nought avail her : now she kneels,  
And the earls rebuke her, and she answers not,  
Kneeling. O Christ, whose likeness there engraved  
She strikes against her bosom, hear her ! Now  
That priest lifts up his voice against her prayer,  
Praying : and a voice all round goes up with his :  
But hers is lift up higher than climbs their cry,  
In the great psalms of penitence : and now  
She prays aloud in English ; for the Pope  
Our father, and his church ; and for her son,  
And for the queen her murderess ; and that God  
May turn from England yet his wrath away ;  
And so forgives her enemies ; and implores  
High intercession of the saints with Christ,  
Whom crucified she kisses on his cross,  
And crossing now her breast—Ah, heard you not ?  
*Even as thine arms were spread upon the cross,*



*So make thy grace, O Jesus, wide for me,  
Receive me to thy mercy so, and so  
Forgive my sins.*

MARY BEATON

So be it, if so God please.  
Is she not risen up yet?

BARBARA

Yea, but mine eyes  
Darken : because those deadly twain close masked  
Draw nigh as men that crave forgiveness, which  
Gently she grants : *for now*, she said, *I hope*  
*You shall end all my troubles.* Now meseems  
They would put hand upon her as to help,  
And disarray her raiment : but she smiles—  
Heard you not that ? can you nor hear nor speak,  
Poor heart, for pain ? *Truly*, she said, *my lords,*  
*I never had such chamber-grooms before*  
*As these to wait on me.*

MARY BEATON

An end, an end.

BARBARA

Now come those twain upon the scaffold up  
Whom she preferred before us : and she lays  
Her crucifix down, which now the headsman takes  
Into his cursed hand, but being rebuked  
Puts back for shame that sacred spoil of hers.  
And now they lift her veil up from her head

Softly, and softly draw the black robe off,  
And all in red as of a funeral flame  
She stands up statelier yet before them, tall  
And clothed as if with sunset : and she takes  
From Elspeth's hand the crimson sleeves, and draws  
Their covering on her arms : and now those twain  
Burst out aloud in weeping : and she speaks—  
*Weep not ; I promised for you.* Now she kneels ;  
And Jane binds round a kerchief on her eyes :  
And smiling last her heavenliest smile on earth,  
She waves a blind hand toward them, with *Farewell,*  
*Farewell, to meet again :* and they come down  
And leave her praying aloud, *In thee, O Lord,*  
*I put my trust :* and now, that psalm being through,  
She lays between the block and her soft neck  
Her long white peerless hands up tenderly,  
Which now the headsman draws again away,  
But softly too : now stir her lips again—  
*Into thine hands, O Lord, into thine hands,*  
*Lord, I commend my spirit :* and now—but now,  
Look you, not I, the last upon her.

MARY BEATON

Ha ! !

He strikes awry : she stirs not. Nay, but now  
He strikes aright, and ends it.

BARBARA

Hark, a cry.

VOICE BELOW

So perish all found enemies of the queen !

ANOTHER VOICE

Amen.

MARY BEATON

I heard that very cry go up  
Far off long since to God, who answers here.

# APPENDIX

## I

### *MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS*

MARY Queen of Scots, daughter of King James V. and his wife Mary of Lorraine, was born in December 1542, a few days before the death of her father, heart-broken by the disgrace of his arms at Solway Moss, where the disaffected nobles had declined to encounter an enemy of inferior force in the cause of a king whose systematic policy had been directed against the privileges of their order, and whose representative on the occasion was an unpopular favourite appointed general in defiance of their ill-will. On September 9 following the ceremony of coronation was duly performed upon the infant. A scheme for her betrothal to Edward Prince of Wales was defeated by the grasping greed of his father, whose obvious ambition to annex the crown of Scotland at once to that of England aroused instantly the general suspicion and indignation of Scottish patriotism. In 1548 the queen of six years old was betrothed to the dauphin Francis, and set sail for

France, where she arrived on August 15. The society in which the child was thenceforward reared is known to readers of Brantôme as well as that of imperial Rome at its worst is known to readers of Suetonius or Petronius,—as well as that of papal Rome at its worst is known to readers of the diary kept by the domestic chaplain of Pope Alexander VI. Only in their pages can a parallel be found to the gay and easy record which reveals without sign of shame or suspicion of offence the daily life of a court compared to which the court of King Charles II. is as the court of Queen Victoria to the society described by Grammont. Debauchery of all kinds and murder in all forms were the daily subjects of excitement or of jest to the brilliant circle which revolved around Queen Catherine de' Medici. After ten years' training under the tutelage of the woman whose main instrument of policy was the corruption of her own children, the queen of Scots, aged fifteen years and five months, was married to the eldest and feeblest of the brood on April 24, 1558. On November 17, Elizabeth became queen of England, and the princes of Lorraine—Francis the great duke of Guise and his brother the cardinal—induced their niece and her husband to assume, in addition to the arms of France and Scotland, the arms of a country over which they asserted the right of Mary Stuart to reign as legitimate heiress of Mary Tudor. Civil strife broke out in Scotland between John Knox and the queen dowager—between the self-styled 'congregation of the Lord' and the adherents of the regent, whose French troops repelled the combined forces of the Scotch and their English allies from the beleaguered walls of Leith, little more than a

month before the death of their mistress in the castle of Edinburgh, on June 10, 1560. On August 25 Protestantism was proclaimed and Catholicism suppressed in Scotland by a convention of states assembled without the assent of the absent queen. On December 5, Francis the Second died; in August 1561 his widow left France for Scotland, having been refused a safe-conduct by Elizabeth on the ground of her own previous refusal to ratify the treaty made with England by her commissioners in the same month of the preceding year. She arrived nevertheless in safety at Leith, escorted by three of her uncles of the house of Lorraine, and bringing in her train her future biographer, Brantôme, and Chastelard, the first of all her voluntary victims. On August 21 she first met the only man able to withstand her; and their first passage of arms left, as he has recorded, upon the mind of John Knox an ineffaceable impression of her 'proud mind, crafty wit, and indurate heart against God and his truth.' And yet her acts of concession and conciliation were such as no fanatic on the opposite side could have approved. She assented, not only to the undisturbed maintenance of the new creed, but even to a scheme for the endowment of the Protestant ministry out of the confiscated lands of the Church. Her half-brother, Lord James Stuart, shared the duties of her chief counsellor with William Maitland of Lethington, the keenest and most liberal thinker in the country. By the influence of Lord James, in spite of the earnest opposition of Knox, permission was obtained for her to hear mass celebrated in her private chapel—a licence to which, said the Reformer, he would have preferred the invasion of ten thousand

Frenchmen. Through all the first troubles of her reign the young queen steered her skilful and dauntless way with the tact of a woman and the courage of a man. An insurrection in the north, headed by the earl of Huntly under pretext of rescuing from justice the life which his son had forfeited by his share in a homicidal brawl, was crushed at a blow by the Lord James, against whose life, as well as against his sister's liberty, the conspiracy of the Gordons had been aimed, and on whom, after the father had fallen in fight and the son had expiated his double offence on the scaffold, the leading rebel's earldom of Murray was conferred by the gratitude of the queen. Exactly four months after the battle of Corrichie, and the subsequent execution of a criminal whom she is said to have 'loved entirely,' had put an end to the first insurrection raised against her, Pierre de Boscosel de Chastelard, who had returned to France with the other companions of her arrival and in November 1562 had revisited Scotland, expiated with his head the offence or the misfortune of a second detection at night in her bed-chamber. In the same month, twenty-five years afterwards, the execution of his mistress, according to the verdict of her contemporaries in France, avenged the blood of a lover who had died without uttering a word to realize the apprehension which (according to Knox) had before his trial impelled her to desire her brother 'that, as he loved her, he would slay Chastelard, and let him never speak word.' And in the same month, two years from the date of Chastelard's execution, her first step was unconsciously taken on the road to Fotheringay, when she gave her heart at first sight to her kinsman Henry Lord Darnley, son

of Matthew Stuart, earl of Lennox, who had suffered an exile of twenty years in expiation of his intrigues with England, and had married the niece of King Henry the Eighth, daughter of his sister Margaret, the widow of James the Fourth, by her second husband, the earl of Angus. Queen Elizabeth, with the almost incredible want of tact or instinctive delicacy which distinguished and disfigured her vigorous intelligence, had recently proposed as a suitor to the Queen of Scots her own high-born and low-souled favourite, Lord Robert Dudley, the widower if not the murderer of Amy Robsart; and she now protested against the project of marriage between Mary and Darnley. Mary, who had already married her kinsman in secret at Stirling Castle with Catholic rites celebrated in the apartment of David Rizzio, her secretary for correspondence with France, assured the English ambassador, in reply to the protest of his mistress, that the marriage would not take place for three months, when a dispensation from the Pope would allow the cousins to be publicly united without offence to the Church. On July 29, 1565, they were accordingly remarried at Holyrood. The hapless and worthless bridegroom had already incurred the hatred of two powerful enemies, the earls of Morton and Glencairn; but the former of these took part with the queen against the forces raised by Murray, Glencairn, and others, under the nominal leadership of Hamilton, duke of Chatelherault, on the double plea of danger to the new religion of the country, and of the illegal proceeding by which Darnley had been proclaimed king of Scots without the needful constitutional assent of the estates of the realm. Murray was cited to attend the 'raid' or array levied



by the king and queen, and was duly denounced by public blast of trumpet for his non-appearance. He entered Edinburgh with his forces, but failed to hold the town against the guns of the castle, and fell back upon Dumfries before the advance of the royal army, which was now joined by James Hepburn, earl of Bothwell, on his return from a three years' outlawed exile in France. He had been accused in 1562 of a plot to seize the queen and put her into the keeping of the earl of Arran, whose pretensions to her hand ended only when his insanity could no longer be concealed. Another new adherent was the son of the late earl of Huntly, to whom the forfeited honours of his house were restored a few months before the marriage of his sister to Bothwell. The queen now appealed to France for aid; but Castelnau, the French ambassador, replied to her passionate pleading by sober and earnest advice to make peace with the malcontents. This counsel was rejected, and in October 1565 the queen marched an army of 18,000 men against them from Edinburgh; their forces dispersed in face of superior numbers, and Murray, on seeking shelter in England, was received with contumely by Elizabeth, whose half-hearted help had failed to support his enterprise, and whose intercession for his return found at first no favour with the queen of Scots. But the conduct of the besotted boy on whom at their marriage she had bestowed the title of king began at once to justify the enterprise and to play into the hands of all his enemies alike. His father set him on to demand the crown matrimonial, which would at least have assured to him the rank and station of independent royalty for life. Rizzio, hitherto his friend and advocate, in-

duced the queen to reply by a reasonable refusal to this hazardous and audacious request. Darnley at once threw himself into the arms of the party opposed to the policy of the queen and her secretary—a policy which at that moment was doubly and trebly calculated to exasperate the fears of the religious and the pride of the patriotic. Mary was invited if not induced by the king of Spain to join his league for the suppression of Protestantism ; while the actual or prospective endowment of Rizzio with Morton's office of chancellor, and the projected attainder of Murray and his allies, combined to inflame at once the anger and the apprehension of the Protestant nobles. According to one account, Darnley privately assured his uncle George Douglas of his wife's infidelity ; he had himself, if he might be believed, discovered the secretary in the queen's apartment at midnight, under circumstances yet more unequivocally compromising than those which had brought Chastellard to the scaffold. Another version of the pitiful history represents Douglas as infusing suspicion of Rizzio into the empty mind of his nephew, and thus winning his consent to a deed already designed by others. A bond was drawn in which Darnley pledged himself to support the confederates who undertook to punish 'certain privy persons' offensive to the state, 'especially a stranger Italian called Davie ;' another was subscribed by Darnley and the banished lords, then biding their time in Newcastle, which engaged him to procure their pardon and restoration, while pledging them to ensure to him the enjoyment of the title he coveted, with the consequent security of an undisputed succession to the crown, despite the counter claims of the house of Hamilton, in case

his wife should die without issue—a result which, intentionally or not, he and his fellow conspirators did all that brutality could have suggested to accelerate and secure. On March 9, the palace of Holyrood was invested by a troop under the command of Morton, while Rizzio was dragged by force out of the queen's presence and slain without trial in the heat of the moment. The parliament was discharged by proclamation issued in the name of Darnley as king; and in the evening of the next day the banished lords, whom it was to have condemned to outlawry, returned to Edinburgh. On the day following they were graciously received by the queen, who undertook to sign a bond for their security, but delayed the subscription till next morning under plea of sickness. During the night she escaped with Darnley, whom she had already seduced from the party of his accomplices, and arrived at Dunbar on the third morning after the slaughter of her favourite. From thence they returned to Edinburgh on March 28, guarded by 2,000 horsemen under the command of Bothwell, who had escaped from Holyrood on the night of the murder, to raise a force on the queen's behalf with his usual soldierly promptitude. The slayers of Rizzio fled to England, and were outlawed; Darnley was permitted to protest his innocence and denounce his accomplices; after which he became the scorn of all parties alike, and few men dared or cared to be seen in his company. On June 19, a son was born to his wife, and in the face of his previous protestations he was induced to acknowledge himself the father. But, as Murray and his partisans returned to favour and influence no longer incompatible with that of Bothwell and Huntly, he grew desperate

enough with terror to dream of escape to France. This design was at once frustrated by the queen's resolution. She summoned him to declare his reasons for it in presence of the French ambassador and an assembly of the nobles ; she besought him for God's sake to speak out, and not spare her ; and at last he left her presence with an avowal that he had nothing to allege. The favour shown to Bothwell had not yet given occasion for scandal, though his character as an adventurous libertine was as notable as his reputation for military hardihood ; but as the summer advanced his insolence increased with his influence at court and the general aversion of his rivals. He was richly endowed by Mary from the greater and lesser spoils of the Church ; and the three wardenships of the border, united for the first time in his person, gave the lord high admiral of Scotland a position of unequalled power. In the gallant discharge of its duties he was dangerously wounded by a leading outlaw, whom he slew in single combat ; and while yet confined to Hermitage Castle he received a visit of two hours from the queen, who rode thither from Jedburgh and back through twenty miles of the wild borderland, where her person was in perpetual danger from the freebooters whom her father's policy had striven and had failed to extirpate. The result of this daring ride was a ten days' fever, after which she removed by short stages to Craigmillar, where a proposal for her divorce from Darnley was laid before her by Bothwell, Murray, Huntly, Argyle, and Lethington, who was chosen spokesman for the rest. She assented on condition that the divorce could be lawfully effected without impeachment of her son's legitimacy ;

whereupon Lethington undertook in the name of all present that she should be rid of her husband without any prejudice to the child—at whose baptism a few days afterwards Bothwell took the place of the putative father, though Darnley was actually residing under the same roof, and it was not till after the ceremony that he was suddenly struck down by a sickness so violent as to excite suspicions of poison. He was removed to Glasgow, and left for the time in charge of his father ; but on the news of his progress towards recovery a bond was drawn up for execution of the sentence of death which had secretly been pronounced against the twice-turned traitor who had earned his doom at all hands alike. On the 22nd of the next month (January 1567) the queen visited her husband at Glasgow and proposed to remove him to Craigmillar Castle, where he would have the benefit of medicinal baths ; but instead of this resort he was conveyed on the last day of the month to the lonely and squalid shelter of the residence which was soon to be made memorable by his murder. Between the ruins of two sacred buildings, with the town-wall to the south and a suburban hamlet known to ill fame as the 'Thieves' Row' to the north of it, a lodging was prepared for the titular king of Scotland, and fitted up with tapestries taken from the Gordons after the battle of Corrichie. On the evening of Sunday, February 9, Mary took her last leave of the miserable boy who had so often and so mortally outraged her as consort and as queen. That night the whole city was shaken out of sleep by an explosion of gunpowder which shattered to fragments the building in which he should have slept and perished ; and next morning the bodies of Darnley and a page

were found strangled in a garden adjoining it, whither they had apparently escaped over a wall, to be despatched by the hands of Bothwell's attendant confederates.

Upon the view which may be taken of Mary's conduct during the next three months depends the whole debatable question of her character. According to the professed champions of that character, this conduct was a tissue of such dastardly imbecility, such heartless irresolution, and such brainless inconsistency, as for ever to dispose of her time-honoured claim to the credit of intelligence and courage. It is certain that just three months and six days after the murder of her husband she became the wife of her husband's murderer. On February 11 she wrote to the bishop of Glasgow, her ambassador in France, a brief letter of simple eloquence, announcing her providential escape from a design upon her own as well as her husband's life. A reward of two thousand pounds was offered by proclamation for discovery of the murderer. Bothwell and others, his satellites or the queen's, were instantly placarded by name as the criminals. Voices were heard by night in the streets of Edinburgh calling down judgment on the assassins. Four days after the discovery of the bodies, Darnley was buried in the chapel of Holyrood with secrecy as remarkable as the solemnity with which Rizzio had been interred there less than a year before. On the Sunday following, Mary left Edinburgh for Seton Palace, twelve miles from the capital, where scandal asserted that she passed the time merrily in shooting-matches with Bothwell for her partner against Lords Seton and Huntly ; other accounts represent Huntly and Bothwell as left at Holyrood in charge of the

infant prince Gracefully and respectfully, with statesmanlike yet feminine dexterity, the demands of Darnley's father for justice on the murderers of his son were accepted and eluded by his daughter-in-law. Bothwell, with a troop of fifty men, rode through Edinburgh defiantly denouncing vengeance on his concealed accusers. As weeks elapsed without action on the part of the royal widow, while the cry of blood was up throughout the country, raising echoes from England and abroad, the murmur of accusation began to rise against her also. Murray, with his sister's ready permission, withdrew to France. Already the report was abroad that the queen was bent on marriage with Bothwell, whose last year's marriage with the sister of Huntly would be dissolved, and the assent of his wife's brother purchased by the restitution of his forfeited estates. According to the *Memoirs* of Sir James Melville, both Lord Herries and himself resolved to appeal to the queen in terms of bold and earnest remonstrance against so desperate and scandalous a design; Herries, having been met with assurances of its unreality and professions of astonishment at the suggestion, instantly fled from court; Melville, evading the danger of a merely personal protest without backers to support him, laid before Mary a letter from a loyal Scot long resident in England, which urged upon her consideration and her conscience the danger and disgrace of such a project yet more freely than Herries had ventured to do by word of mouth; but the sole result was that it needed all the queen's courage and resolution to rescue him from the violence of the man for whom, she was reported to have said, she cared not if she lost

France, England, and her own country, and would go with him to the world's end in a white petticoat before she would leave him. On March 28 the privy council, in which Bothwell himself sat, appointed April 12 as the day of his trial; Lennox, instead of the crown, being named as the accuser, and cited by royal letters to appear at 'the humble request and petition of the said Earl Bothwell,' who on the day of the trial had 4,000 armed men behind him in the streets, while the castle was also at his command. Under these arrangements it was not thought wonderful that Lennox discreetly declined the danger of attendance, even with 3,000 men ready to follow him, at the risk of desperate street fighting. He pleaded sickness, asked for more time, and demanded that the accused, instead of enjoying special favour, should share the treatment of other suspected criminals. But as no particle of evidence on his side was advanced, the protest of his representative was rejected, and Bothwell, acquitted in default of witnesses against him, was free to challenge any persistent accuser to the ancient ordeal of battle. His wealth and power were enlarged by gift of the parliament which met on the 14th and rose on the 19th of April,—a date made notable by the subsequent supper at Ainslie's tavern, where Bothwell obtained the signatures of its leading members to a document affirming his innocence, and pledging the subscribers to maintain it against all challengers, to stand by him in all his quarrels, and finally to promote by all means in their power the marriage by which they recommended the queen to reward his services and benefit the country. On the second day following Mary went to visit her child at Stirling,



where his guardian, the earl of Mar, refused to admit more than two women in her train. It was well known in Edinburgh that Bothwell had a body of men ready to intercept her on the way back, and carry her to Dunbar—not, as was naturally inferred, without good assurance of her consent. On April 24, as she approached Edinburgh, Bothwell accordingly met her at the head of 800 spearmen, assured her (as she afterwards averred) that she was in the utmost peril, and escorted her, together with Huntly, Lethington, and Melville, who were then in attendance, to Dunbar Castle. On May 3, Lady Jane Gordon, who had become countess of Bothwell on February 22 of the year preceding, obtained, on the ground of her husband's infidelities, a separation which, however, would not under the old laws of Catholic Scotland have left him free to marry again; on the 7th, accordingly, the necessary divorce was pronounced, after two days' session, by a clerical tribunal which ten days before had received from the queen a special commission to give judgment on a plea of somewhat apocryphal consanguinity alleged by Bothwell as the ground of an action for divorce against his wife. The fact was studiously evaded or concealed that a dispensation had been granted by the archbishop of St. Andrews for this irregularity, which could only have arisen through some illicit connection of the husband with a relative of the wife between whom and himself no affinity by blood or marriage could be proved. On the day when the first or Protestant divorce was pronounced, Mary and Bothwell returned to Edinburgh with every prepared appearance of a peaceful triumph. Lest her captivity should have been held to invalidate the late

legal proceedings in her name, proclamation was made of forgiveness accorded by the queen to her captor in consideration of his past and future services, and her intention was announced to reward them by further promotion ; and on the same day (May 12) he was duly created duke of Orkney and Shetland. The duke, as a conscientious Protestant, refused to marry his mistress according to the rites of her church ; and she, the chosen champion of its cause, agreed to be married to him, not merely by a Protestant, but by one who before his conversion had been a Catholic bishop, and should therefore have been more hateful and contemptible in her eyes than any ordinary heretic, had not religion as well as policy, faith as well as reason, been absorbed or superseded by some more mastering passion or emotion. This passion or emotion, according to those who deny her attachment to Bothwell, was simply terror—the blind and irrational prostration of an abject spirit before the cruel force of circumstances and the crafty wickedness of men. Hitherto, according to all evidence, she had shown herself on all occasions, as on all subsequent occasions she indisputably showed herself, the most fearless, the most keen-sighted, the most ready-witted, the most high-gifted and high-spirited of women ; gallant and generous, skilful and practical, never to be cowed by fortune, never to be cajoled by craft ; neither more unselfish in her ends nor more unscrupulous in her practice than might have been expected from her training and her creed. But at the crowning moment of trial there are those who assert their belief that the woman who on her way to the field of Corrichie had uttered her wish to be a man, that she

might know all the hardship and all the enjoyment of a soldier's life, riding forth 'in jack and knapscurr'—the woman who long afterwards was to hold her own for two days together without help of counsel against all the array of English law and English statesmanship, armed with irrefragable evidence and supported by the resentment of a nation—showed herself equally devoid of moral and of physical resolution; too senseless to realize the significance and too heartless to face the danger of a situation from which the simplest exercise of reason, principle, or courage must have rescued the most unsuspicious and inexperienced of honest women who was not helplessly deficient in self-reliance and self-respect. The famous correspondence produced next year in evidence against her at the conference of York may have been, as her partisans affirm, so craftily garbled and falsified by interpolation, suppression, perversion, or absolute forgery, as to be all but historically worthless. Its acceptance or its rejection does not in any degree whatever affect, for better or for worse, the rational estimate of her character. The problem presented by the simple existence of the facts just summed up remains in either case absolutely the same.

That the coarse and imperious nature of the hardy and able ruffian who had now become openly her master should no less openly have shown itself even in the first moments of their inauspicious union is what any bystander of common insight must inevitably have foreseen. Tears, dejection, and passionate expressions of a despair 'wishing only for death,' bore fitful and variable witness to her first sense of a heavier yoke than yet had galled her spirit and her pride. At other times her affectionate gaiety would

give evidence as trustworthy of a fearless and improvident satisfaction. They rode out in state together, and if he kept cap in hand as a subject she would snatch it from him and clap it on his head again ; while in graver things she took all due or possible care to gratify his ambition, by the insertion of a clause in their contract of marriage which made their joint signature necessary to all documents of state issued under the sign-manual. She despatched to France a special envoy, the bishop of Dumblane, with instructions setting forth at length the unparalleled and hitherto ill-requited services and merits of Bothwell, and the necessity of compliance at once with his passion and with the unanimous counsel of the nation,—a people who would endure the rule of no foreign consort, and whom none of their own countrymen were so competent to control, alike by wisdom and by valour, as the incomparable subject of her choice. These personal merits and this political necessity were the only pleas advanced in a letter to her ambassador in England. But that neither plea would avail her for a moment in Scotland she had ominous evidence on the thirteenth day after her marriage, when no response was made to the usual form of proclamation for a raid or levy of forces under pretext of a campaign against the reivers of the border. On the 6th or 7th of June Mary and Bothwell took refuge in Borthwick Castle, twelve miles from the capital, where the fortress was in the keeping of an adherent whom the diplomacy of Sir James Melville had succeeded in detaching from his allegiance to Bothwell. The fugitives were pursued and beleaguered by the earl of Morton and Lord Hume, who declared their purpose to rescue

the queen from the thralldom of her husband. He escaped, leaving her free to follow him or to join the party of her professed deliverers. But whatever cause she might have found since marriage to complain of his rigorous custody and domineering brutality was insufficient to break the ties by which he held her. Alone, in the disguise of a page, she slipped out of the castle at midnight, and rode off to meet him at a tower two miles distant, whence they fled together to Dunbar. The confederate lords on entering Edinburgh were welcomed by the citizens, and after three hours' persuasion Lethington, who had now joined them, prevailed on the captain of the castle to deliver it also into their hands. Proclamations were issued in which the crime of Bothwell was denounced, and the disgrace of the country, the thralldom of the queen, and the mortal peril of her infant son were set forth as reasons for summoning all the lieges of the chief cities of Scotland to rise in arms on three hours' notice and join the forces assembled against the one common enemy. News of his approach reached them on the night of June 14, and they marched before dawn with 2,200 men to meet him near Musselburgh. Mary meanwhile had passed from Dunbar to Haddington, and thence to Seton, where 1,600 men rallied to her side. On June 15, one month from their marriage day, the queen and Bothwell, at the head of a force of fairly equal numbers but visibly inferior discipline, met the army of the confederates at Carberry Hill, some six miles from Edinburgh. Du Croc, the French ambassador, obtained permission through the influence of Maitland to convey to the queen the terms proposed by their leaders,—that she and

Bothwell should part, or that he should meet in single combat a champion chosen from among their number. Bothwell offered to meet any man of sufficient quality ; Mary would not assent. As the afternoon wore on their force began to melt away by desertion and to break up for lack of discipline. Again the trial by single combat was proposed, and thrice the proposal fell through, owing to objections on this side or on that. At last it was agreed that the queen should yield herself prisoner, and Bothwell be allowed to retire in safety to Dunbar with the few followers who remained to him. Mary took leave of her first and last master with passionate anguish and many parting kisses ; but in face of his enemies, and in hearing of the cries which burst from the ranks, demanding her death by fire as a murderess and harlot, the whole heroic and passionate spirit of the woman represented by her admirers as a spiritless imbecile flamed out in responsive threats to have all the men hanged and crucified, in whose power she now stood helpless and alone. She grasped the hand of Lord Lindsay as he rode beside her, and swore 'by this hand' she would 'have his head for this.' In Edinburgh she was received by a yelling mob, which flaunted before her at each turn a banner representing the corpse of Darnley with her child beside it invoking on his knees the retribution of Divine justice. From the violence of a multitude in which women of the worst class were more furious than the men she was sheltered in the house of the provost, where she repeatedly showed herself at the window, appealing aloud with dishevelled hair and dress to the mercy which no man could look upon her and refuse. At nine in the evening she was

removed to Holyrood, and thence to the port of Leith, where she embarked under guard, with her attendants, for the island castle of Lochleven. On the 20th a silver casket containing letters and French verses, miscalled sonnets, in the handwriting of the queen, was taken from the person of a servant who had been sent by Bothwell to bring it from Edinburgh to Dunbar. Even in the existing versions of the letters, translated from the lost originals and re-translated from this translation of a text which was probably destroyed in 1603 by order of King James on his accession to the English throne,—even in these possibly disfigured versions, the fiery pathos of passion, the fierce and piteous fluctuations of spirit between love and hate, hope and rage and jealousy, have an eloquence apparently beyond the imitation or invention of art. Three days after this discovery Lord Lindsay, Lord Ruthven, and Sir Robert Melville were despatched to Lochleven, there to obtain the queen's signature to an act of abdication in favour of her son, and another appointing Murray regent during his minority. She submitted, and a commission of regency was established till the return from France of Murray, who, on August 15, arrived at Lochleven with Morton and Athole. According to his own account, the expostulations as to her past conduct which preceded his admonitions for the future were received with tears, confessions, and attempts at extenuation or excuse; but when they parted next day on good terms she had regained her usual spirits. Nor from that day forward had they reason to sink again, in spite of the close keeping in which she was held, with the daughters of the house for bed-fellows. Their

mother and the regent's, her father's former mistress, was herself not impervious to her prisoner's lifelong power of seduction and subjugation. Her son George Douglas fell inevitably under the charm. A rumour transmitted to England went so far as to assert that she had proposed him to their common half-brother Murray as a fourth husband for herself; a later tradition represented her as the mother of a child by him. A third report, at least as improbable as either, asserted that a daughter of Mary and Bothwell, born about this time, lived to be a nun in France. It is certain that the necessary removal of George Douglas from Lochleven enabled him to devise a method of escape for the prisoner on March 25, 1568, which was frustrated by detection of her white hands under the disguise of a laundress. But a younger member of the household, Willie Douglas, aged eighteen, whose devotion was afterwards remembered and his safety cared for by Mary at a time of utmost risk and perplexity to herself, succeeded on May 2 in assisting her to escape by a postern gate to the lake-side, and thence in a boat to the mainland, where George Douglas, Lord Seton, and others were awaiting her. Thence they rode to Seton's castle of Niddry, and next day to Hamilton Palace, round which an army of 6,000 men was soon assembled, and whither the new French ambassador to Scotland hastened to pay his duty. The queen's abdication was revoked, messengers were despatched to the English and French courts, and word was sent to Murray at Glasgow that he must resign the regency, and should be pardoned in common with all offenders against the queen. But on the day when Mary arrived at Hamilton Murray had summoned to



Glasgow the feudatories of the crown, to take arms against the insurgent enemies of the infant king. Elizabeth sent conditional offers of help to her kinswoman, provided she would accept of English intervention and abstain from seeking foreign assistance ; but the messenger came too late. Mary's followers had failed to retake Dunbar Castle from the regent, and made for Dumbarton instead, marching two miles south of Glasgow, by the village of Langside. Here Murray with 4,500 men, under leaders of high distinction, met the 6,000 of the queen's army, whose ablest man, Herries, was as much distrusted by Mary as by every one else, while the Hamiltons could only be trusted to think of their own interests, and were suspected of treasonable designs on all who stood between their house and the monarchy. On May 13, the battle or skirmish of Langside determined the result of the campaign in three quarters of an hour. Kirkaldy of Grange, who commanded the regent's cavalry, seized and kept the place of vantage from the beginning, and at the first sign of wavering on the other side shattered at a single charge the forces of the queen, with a loss of one man to three hundred. Mary fled sixty miles from the field of her last battle before she halted at Sanquhar, and for three days of flight, according to her own account, had to sleep on the hard ground, live on oatmeal and sour milk, and fare at night like the owls, in hunger, cold, and fear. On the third day from the rout of Langside she crossed the Solway, and landed at Workington in Cumberland, May 16, 1568. On the 20th Lord Scrope and Sir Francis Knollys were sent from court to carry messages and letters of comfort from Elizabeth to Mary at Carlisle. On June 11 Knollys wrote

to Cecil at once the best description and the noblest panegyric extant of the queen of Scots—enlarging, with a brave man's sympathy, on her indifference to form and ceremony, her daring grace and openness of manner, her frank display of a great desire to be avenged of her enemies, her readiness to expose herself to all perils in hope of victory, her delight to hear of hardihood and courage, commending by name all her enemies of approved valour, sparing no cowardice in her friends, but above all things athirst for victory by any means at any price, so that for its sake pain and peril seemed pleasant to her, and wealth and all things, if compared with it, contemptible and vile. What was to be done with such a princess, whether she were to be nourished in one's bosom, above all whether it could be advisable or safe to try any diplomatic tricks upon such a lady, Knollys left for the minister to judge. It is remarkable that he should not have discovered in her the qualities so obvious to modern champions of her character—easiness, gullibility, incurable innocence and invincible ignorance of evil, incapacity to suspect or resent anything, readiness to believe and forgive all things. On July 15, after various delays interposed by her reluctance to leave the neighbourhood of the border, where on her arrival she had received the welcome and the homage of the leading Catholic houses of Northumberland and Cumberland, she was removed to Bolton Castle in North Yorkshire. During her residence here a conference was held at York between her own and Elizabeth's commissioners and those appointed to represent her son as king of Scots. These latter, of whom Murray himself was the chief, privately laid before the English commis-

sioners the contents of the famous casket. On October 24 the place of the conference was shifted from York to London, where the inquiry was to be held before Queen Elizabeth in council. Mary was already aware that the chief of the English commissioners, the duke of Norfolk, was secretly an aspirant to the peril of her hand ; and on October 21 she gave the first sign of assent to the suggestion of a divorce from Bothwell. On October 26 the charge of complicity in the murder of Darnley was distinctly brought forward against her in spite of Norfolk's reluctance and Murray's previous hesitation. Elizabeth, by the mouth of her chief justice, formally rebuked the audacity of the subjects who durst bring such a charge against their sovereign, and challenged them to advance their proofs. They complied by the production of an indictment under five heads, supported by the necessary evidence of documents. The number of English commissioners was increased, and they were bound to preserve secrecy as to the matters revealed. Further evidence was supplied by Thomas Crawford, a retainer of the house of Lennox, tallying so exactly with the text of the Casket Letters as to have been cited in proof that the latter must needs be a forgery. Elizabeth, on the close of the evidence, invited Mary to reply to the proofs alleged before she could be admitted to her presence ; but Mary simply desired her commissioners to withdraw from the conference. She declined with scorn the proposal made by Elizabeth through Knollys, that she should sign a second abdication in favour of her son. On January 10, 1569, the judgment given at the conference acquitted Murray and his adherents of rebellion, while affirming that nothing had been proved against

Mary—a verdict accepted by Murray as equivalent to a practical recognition of his office as regent for the infant king. This position he was not long to hold ; and the fierce exultation of Mary at the news of his murder gave to those who believed in her complicity with the murderer, on whom a pension was bestowed by her unblushing gratitude, fresh reason to fear, if her liberty of correspondence and intrigue were not restrained, the likelihood of a similar fate for Elizabeth. On January 26, 1569, she had been removed from Bolton Castle to Tutbury in Staffordshire, where proposals were conveyed to her, at the instigation of Leicester, for a marriage with the duke of Norfolk, to which she gave a graciously conditional assent ; but the discovery of these proposals consigned Norfolk to the Tower, and on the outbreak of an insurrection in the north Mary, by Lord Hunsdon's advice, was again removed to Coventry, when a body of her intending deliverers was within a day's ride of Tutbury. On January 23 following Murray was assassinated ; and a second northern insurrection was crushed in a single sharp fight by Lord Hunsdon. In October Cecil had an interview with Mary at Chatsworth, when the conditions of her possible restoration to the throne in compliance with French demands were debated at length. The queen of Scots, with dauntless dignity, refused to yield the castles of Edinburgh and Dumbarton into English keeping, or to deliver up her fugitive English partisans then in Scotland ; upon other points they came to terms, and the articles were signed October 16. On the same day Mary wrote to Elizabeth, requesting with graceful earnestness the favour of an interview which might reassure her against the suggestion that

this treaty was a mere pretence. On November 28 she was removed to Sheffield Castle, where she remained for the next fourteen years in charge of the earl of Shrewsbury. The detection of a plot, in which Norfolk was implicated, for the invasion of England by Spain on behalf of Mary, who was then to take him as the fourth and most contemptible of her husbands, made necessary the reduction of her household and the stricter confinement of her person. On May 28, 1572, a demand from both houses of parliament for her execution as well as Norfolk's was generously rejected by Elizabeth ; but after the punishment of the traitorous pretender to her hand, on whom she had lavished many eloquent letters of affectionate protestation, she fell into 'a passion of sickness' which convinced her honest keeper of her genuine grief for the ducal caitiff. A treaty projected on the news of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, by which Mary should be sent back to Scotland for immediate execution, was broken off by the death of the earl of Mar, who had succeeded Lennox as regent ; nor was it found possible to come to acceptable terms on a like understanding with his successor Morton, who in 1577 sent a proposal to Mary for her restoration, which she declined, in suspicion of a plot laid to entrap her by the policy of Sir Francis Walsingham, the most unscrupulously patriotic of her English enemies, who four years afterwards sent word to Scotland that the execution of Morton, so long the ally of England, would be answered by the execution of Mary. But on that occasion Elizabeth again refused her assent either to the trial of Mary or to her transference from Sheffield to the Tower. In 1581 Mary accepted the advice of Catherine de'

Medici and Henry III. that she should allow her son's title to reign as king of Scotland conjointly with herself when released and restored to a share of the throne. This plan was but part of a scheme including the invasion of England by her kinsman the duke of Guise, who was to land in the north and raise a Scottish army to place the released prisoner of Sheffield beside her son on the throne of Elizabeth. After the overthrow of the Scottish accomplices in this notable project, Mary poured forth upon Elizabeth a torrent of pathetic and eloquent reproach for the many wrongs she had suffered at the hands of her hostess, and pledged her honour to the assurance that she now aspired to no kingdom but that of heaven. In the spring of 1583 she retained enough of this saintly resignation to ask for nothing but liberty, without a share in the government of Scotland ; but Lord Burghley not unreasonably preferred, if feasible, to reconcile the alliance of her son with the detention of his mother. In 1584 the long-suffering earl of Shrewsbury was relieved of his fourteen years' charge through the involuntary good offices of his wife, whose daughter by her first husband had married a brother of Darnley ; and their orphan child Arabella, born in England, of royal descent on the father's side, was now, in the hopeful view of her grandmother, a more plausible claimant than the king or queen of Scots to the inheritance of the English throne. In December 1583 Mary had laid before the French ambassador her first complaint of the slanders spread by Lady Shrewsbury and her sons, who were ultimately compelled to confess the falsehood of their imputations on the queen of Scots and her keeper. It was probably at the time when

a desire for revenge on her calumniatress made her think the opportunity good and safe for discharge of such a two-edged dart at the countess and the queen that Mary wrote, but abstained from despatching, the famous and terrible letter in which, with many gracious excuses and professions of regret and attachment, she transmits to Elizabeth a full and vivid report of the hideous gossip retailed by Bess of Hardwick regarding her character and person at a time when the reporter of these abominations was on friendly terms with her husband's royal charge. In the autumn of 1584 she was removed to Wingfield Manor under charge of Sir Ralph Sadler and John Somers, who accompanied her also on her next removal to Tutbury in January 1585. A letter received by her in that cold, dark, and unhealthy castle, of which fifteen years before she had made painful and malodorous experience, assured her that her son would acknowledge her only as queen-mother, and provoked at once the threat of a parent's curse and an application to Elizabeth for sympathy. In April 1585 Sir Amyas Paulet was appointed to the office of which Sadler, accused of careless indulgence, had requested to be relieved; and on Christmas Eve she was removed from the hateful shelter of Tutbury to the castle of Chartley in the same county. Her correspondence in cipher from thence with her English agents abroad, intercepted by Walsingham and deciphered by his secretary, gave eager encouragement to the design for a Spanish invasion of England under the prince of Parma—an enterprise in which she would do her utmost to make her son take part, and in case of his refusal would induce the Catholic nobles of Scotland to betray

him into the hands of Philip, from whose tutelage he should be released only on her demand, or if after her death he should wish to return, nor then unless he had become a Catholic. But even these patriotic and maternal schemes to consign her child and reconsign the kingdom to the keeping of the Inquisition, incarnate in the widower of Mary Tudor, were superseded by the attraction of a conspiracy against the throne and life of Elizabeth. Anthony Babington, in his boyhood a ward of Shrewsbury, resident in the household at Sheffield Castle, and thus subjected to the charm before which so many victims had already fallen, was now induced to undertake the deliverance of the queen of Scots by the murder of the queen of England. It is maintained by those admirers of Mary who assume her to have been an almost absolute imbecile, gifted with the power of imposing herself on the world as a woman of unsurpassed ability, that, while cognisant of the plot for her deliverance by English rebels and an invading army of foreign auxiliaries, she might have been innocently unconscious that this conspiracy involved the simultaneous assassination of Elizabeth. In the conduct and detection of her correspondence with Babington, traitor was played off against traitor, and spies were utilized against assassins, with as little scruple as could be required or expected in the diplomacy of the time. As in the case of the Casket Letters, it is alleged that forgery was employed to interpolate sufficient evidence of Mary's complicity in a design of which it is thought credible that she was kept in ignorance by the traitors and murderers who had enrolled themselves in her service,—that one who pensioned the actual



murderer of Murray and a would-be murderer of Elizabeth was incapable of approving what her keen and practised intelligence was too blunt and torpid to anticipate as inevitable and inseparable from the general design. In August the conspirators were netted, and Mary was arrested at the gate of Tixall Park, whither Paulet had taken her under pretence of a hunting party. At Tixall she was detained till her papers at Chartley had undergone thorough research. That she was at length taken in her own toils even such a dullard as her admirers depict her could not have failed to understand ; that she was no such dastard as to desire or deserve such defenders the whole brief course of her remaining life bore consistent and irrefragable witness. Her first thought on her return to Chartley was one of loyal gratitude and womanly sympathy. She cheered the wife of her English secretary, now under arrest, with promises to answer for her husband to all accusations brought against him, took her new-born child from the mother's arms, and in default of clergy baptized it, to Paulet's Puritanic horror, with her own hands by her own name. The next or the twin-born impulse of her indomitable nature was, as usual in all times of danger, one of passionate and high-spirited defiance, on discovering the seizure of her papers. A fortnight afterwards her keys and her money were confiscated, while she, bedridden, and unable to move her hand, could only ply the terrible weapon of her bitter and fiery tongue. Her secretaries were examined in London, and one of them gave evidence that she had first heard of the conspiracy by letter from Babington, of whose design against the life of Elizabeth she thought it best to take no notice in her

reply, though she did not hold herself bound to reveal it. On September 25 she was removed to the strong castle of Fotheringay in Northamptonshire. On October 6 she was desired by letter from Elizabeth to answer the charges brought against her before certain of the chief English nobles appointed to sit in commission on the cause. In spite of her first refusal to submit, she was induced by the arguments of the vice-chamberlain, Sir Christopher Hatton, to appear before this tribunal on condition that her protest should be registered against the legality of its jurisdiction over a sovereign, the next heir of the English crown.

On October 14 and 15, 1586, the trial was held in the hall of Fotheringay Castle. Alone, 'without one counsellor on her side among so many,' Mary conducted the whole of her own defence with courage incomparable and unsurpassable ability. Pathos and indignation, subtlety and simplicity, personal appeal and political reasoning, were the alternate weapons with which she fought against all odds of evidence or inference, and disputed step by step every inch of debatable ground. She repeatedly insisted on the production of proof in her own handwriting as to her complicity with the project of the assassins who had expiated their crime on the 20th and 21st of the month preceding. When the charge was shifted to the question of her intrigues with Spain, she took her stand resolutely on her right to convey whatever right she possessed, though now no kingdom was left her for disposal, to whomsoever she might choose. One single slip she made in the whole course of her defence; but none could have been more unluckily characteristic and significant. When

Burghley brought against her the unanswerable charge of having at that moment in her service, and in receipt of an annual pension, the instigator of a previous attempt on the life of Elizabeth, she had the unwary audacity to cite in her justification the pensions allowed by Elizabeth to her adversaries in Scotland, and especially to her son. It is remarkable that just two months later, in a conversation with her keepers, she again made use of the same extraordinary argument in reply to the same inevitable imputation, and would not be brought to admit that the two cases were other than parallel. But except for this single instance of oversight or perversity her defence was throughout a masterpiece of indomitable ingenuity, of delicate and steadfast courage, of womanly dignity and genius. Finally she demanded, as she had demanded before, a trial either before the estates of the realm lawfully assembled, or else before the queen in council. So closed the second day of the trial; and before the next day's work could begin a note of two or three lines hastily written at midnight informed the commissioners that Elizabeth had suddenly determined to adjourn the expected judgment and transfer the place of it to the star-chamber. Here, on October 25, the commissioners again met; and one of them alone, Lord Zouch, dissented from the verdict by which Mary was found guilty of having, since June 1 preceding, compassed and imagined divers matters tending to the destruction of Elizabeth. This verdict was conveyed to her, about three weeks later, by Lord Buckhurst and Robert Beale, clerk of the privy council. At the intimation that her life was an impediment to the security of the received religion, 'she

seemed with a certain unwonted alacrity to triumph, giving God thanks, and rejoicing in her heart that she was held to be an instrument' for the restoration of her own faith. This note of exultation as in martyrdom was maintained with unflinching courage to the last. She wrote to Elizabeth and the duke of Guise two letters of almost matchless eloquence and pathos, admirable especially for their loyal and grateful remembrance of all her faithful servants. Between the date of these letters and the day of her execution wellnigh three months of suspense elapsed. Elizabeth, fearless almost to a fault in face of physical danger, constant in her confidence even after discovery of her narrow escape from the poisoned bullets of household conspirators, was cowardly even to a crime in face of subtler and more complicated peril. She rejected with resolute dignity the intercession of French envoys for the life of the queen-dowager of France; she allowed the sentence of death to be proclaimed, and welcomed with bonfires and bell-ringing throughout the length of England; she yielded a respite of twelve days to the pleading of the French ambassador, and had a charge trumped up against him of participation in a conspiracy against her life; at length, on February 1, 1587, she signed the death warrant, and then made her secretaries write word to Paulet of her displeasure that in all this time he should not of himself have found out some way to shorten the life of his prisoner, as in duty bound by his oath, and thus relieve her singularly tender conscience from the guilt of bloodshed. Paulet, with loyal and regretful indignation, declined the disgrace proposed to him in a suggestion 'to shed blood without law or warrant'; and on

February 7 the earls of Shrewsbury and Kent arrived at Fotheringay with the commission of the council for execution of the sentence given against his prisoner. Mary received the announcement with majestic tranquillity, expressing in dignified terms her readiness to die, her consciousness that she was a martyr for her religion, and her total ignorance of any conspiracy against the life of Elizabeth. At night she took a graceful and affectionate leave of her attendants, distributed among them her money and jewels, wrote out in full the various legacies to be conveyed by her will, and charged her apothecary Gorion with her last messages for the king of Spain. In these messages the whole nature of the woman was revealed. Not a single friend, not a single enemy, was forgotten; the slightest service, the slightest wrong, had its place assigned in her faithful and implacable memory for retribution or reward. Forgiveness of injuries was as alien from her fierce and loyal spirit as forgetfulness of benefits; the destruction of England and its liberties by Spanish invasion and conquest was the strongest aspiration of her parting soul. At eight next morning she entered the hall of execution, having taken leave of the weeping envoy from Scotland, to whom she gave a brief message for her son; took her seat on the scaffold, listened with an air of even cheerful unconcern to the reading of her sentence, solemnly declared her innocence of the charge conveyed in it and her consolation in the prospect of ultimate justice, rejected the professional services of Richard Fletcher, dean of Peterborough, lifted up her voice in Latin against his in English prayer, and when he and his fellow-worshippers had fallen duly silent prayed

aloud for the prosperity of her own Church, for Elizabeth, for her son, and for all the enemies whom she had commended overnight to the notice of the Spanish invader ; then, with no less courage than had marked every hour and every action of her life, received the stroke of death from the wavering hand of the headsman.

Mary Stuart was in many respects the creature of her age, of her creed, and of her station ; but the noblest and most noteworthy qualities of her nature were independent of rank, opinion, or time. Even the detractors who defend her conduct on the plea that she was a dastard and a dupe are compelled in the same breath to retract this implied reproach, and to admit, with illogical acclamation and incongruous applause, that the world never saw more splendid courage at the service of more brilliant intelligence ; that a braver if not ' a rarer spirit never did steer humanity.' A kinder or more faithful friend, a deadlier or more dangerous enemy, it would be impossible to dread or to desire. Passion alone could shake the double fortress of her impregnable heart and ever active brain. The passion of love, after very sufficient experience, she apparently and naturally outlived ; the passion of hatred and revenge was as inextinguishable in her inmost nature as the emotion of loyalty and gratitude. Of repentance it would seem that she knew as little as of fear ; having been trained from her infancy in a religion where the Decalogue was supplanted by the Creed. Adept as she was in the most exquisite delicacy of dissimulation, the most salient note of her original disposition was daring rather than subtlety. Beside or behind the voluptuous or intellectual

attractions of beauty and culture, she had about her the fresher charm of a fearless and frank simplicity, a genuine and enduring pleasure in small and harmless things no less than in such as were neither. In 1562 she amused herself for some days by living 'with her little troop' in the house of a burgess of St. Andrews 'like a burgess's wife,' assuring the English ambassador that he should not find the queen there,—'nor I know not myself where she is become.' From Sheffield Lodge, twelve years later, she applied to the archbishop of Glasgow and the cardinal of Guise for some pretty little dogs, to be sent her in baskets very warmly packed—'for besides reading and working, I take pleasure only in all the little animals that I can get.' No lapse of reconciling time, no extent of comparative indulgence, could break her into resignation, submission, or toleration of even partial restraint. Three months after the massacre of St. Bartholomew had caused some additional restrictions to be placed upon her freedom of action, Shrewsbury writes to Burghley that 'rather than continue this imprisonment she sticks not to say she will give her body, her son, and country for liberty'; nor did she ever show any excess of regard for any of the three. For her own freedom of will and of way, of passion and of action, she cared much; for her creed she cared something; for her country she cared less than nothing. She would have flung Scotland with England into the hellfire of Spanish Catholicism rather than forego the faintest chance of personal revenge. Her profession of a desire to be instructed in the doctrines of Anglican Protestantism was so transparently a pious fraud as rather to afford confirmation than to

arouse suspicion of her fidelity to the teaching of her Church. Elizabeth, so shamefully her inferior in personal loyalty, fidelity, and gratitude, was as clearly her superior on the one all-important point of patriotism. The saving salt of Elizabeth's character, with all its wellnigh incredible mixture of heroism and egotism, meanness and magnificence, was simply this ; that, overmuch as she loved herself, she did yet love England better. Her best though not her only fine qualities were national and political, the high public virtues of a good public servant : in the private and personal qualities which attract and attach a friend to his friend and a follower to his leader, no man or woman was ever more constant and more eminent than Mary Queen of Scots.





## II

### *THE CHARACTER OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS*

AMONG the various points of view taken in time past and present by students of a subject which must surely have lost its interest long since if that interest were less than inexhaustible, I have always missed, and wondered at the general oversight which appears to ignore it, one which would most naturally seem to present itself for candid and rational consideration by either party to the argument. Every shade of possible opinion on the matter has found in its various champions every possible gradation of ability in debate. And the universal result, as it appears to an outsider,—to a student of history unconscious alike of prejudice and of prepossession,—is that they who came to curse the memory of Mary Stuart have blessed it as with the blessing of a Balaam, and they who came to bless it, with tribute of panegyric or with testimony in defence, have inevitably and invariably cursed it altogether. To vindicate her from the imputations of her vindicators would be the truest service that could now be done by the most loyal devotion to her name and fame.

A more thorough, more earnest, and on the

whole a more able apology for any disputed or debatable character in all the range of history it would indeed be hard to find than that which has been attempted by Mr. Hosack in his two copious and laborious volumes on *Mary Queen of Scots and her Accusers*. Every point of vantage throughout the intricacies of irreconcilable evidence is clearly seen, is swiftly seized, is manfully defended. And the ultimate outcome of all is the presentation of a figure beside which, I do not say the Mary Stuart of Mr. Froude, but the Mary Stuart of George Buchanan, is an acceptable and respectable type of royal womanhood—a pardonable if not admirable example of human character. Many bitter and terrible things were said of that woman in her lifetime by many fierce and unscrupulous enemies of her person or her creed; many grave and crushing charges were alleged against her on plausible or improbable grounds of impeachment or suspicion. But two things were never imputed to her by the most reckless ferocity of malice or of fear. No one ever dreamed of saying that Mary Queen of Scots was a fool. And no one ever dared to suggest that Mary Queen of Scots was a coward.

That there are fewer moral impossibilities than would readily be granted by the professional moralist, those students of human character who are not professional moralists may very readily admit. A very short and a very narrow experience will suffice to preserve a man—or for that matter a boy—of average intelligence from any sense of shocked astonishment when his expectation is confronted by ‘fears of the brave and follies of the wise,’ instances of mercy

in the unmerciful or cruelty in the humane. But there is a limit to the uttermost range of such paradoxical possibilities. And that limit is reached and crossed, cleared at a leap and left far out of sight, by the theorist who demands our assent to such a theorem as this : That a woman whose intelligence was below the average level of imbecility, and whose courage was below the average level of a coward's, should have succeeded throughout the whole course of a singularly restless and adventurous career in imposing herself upon the judgment of every man and every woman with whom she ever came into any sort or kind of contact, as a person of the most brilliant abilities and the most dauntless daring. *Credat Catholicus* ; for such faith must surely exceed the most credulous capacity of ancient Jew or modern Gentile.

But this is not all, or nearly all. Let us admit, though it be no small admission, that Mary Stuart, who certainly managed to pass herself off upon every one who came near her under any circumstances as the brightest and the bravest creature of her kind in any rank or any country of the world, was dastard enough to be cowed into a marriage which she was idiot enough to imagine could be less than irretrievable ruin to her last chance of honour or prosperity. The violence of Bothwell and the perfidy of her council imposed forsooth this miserable necessity on the credulous though reluctant victim of brute force on the one hand and treasonable fraud on the other. Persuaded by the request and convinced by the reasoning of those about her, Lucretia felt it nothing less than a duty to accept the hand of Tar-

quin yet reeking from the blood of Collatinus. The situation is worthy of one of Mr. Gilbert's incomparable ballads or burlesques; and her contemporaries, Catholic or Protestant, friend or foe, rival or ally, may be forgiven if they failed at once to grasp and realize it as a sufficiently plausible solution of all doubts and difficulties not otherwise as rationally explicable. Yet possibly it may not be impossible that an exceptionally stupid girl, reared from her babyhood in an atmosphere of artificially exceptional innocence, might play at once the active and the passive part assigned to Mary, before and after the execution of the plot against her husband's life, by the traducers who have undertaken her defence. But for this improbability to be possible it is obviously necessary to assume in this pitiable puppet an extent of ignorance to be equalled only, and scarcely, by the depth and the density of her dullness. A woman utterly wanting in tact, intuition, perception of character or grasp of circumstance—a woman abnormally devoid of such native instinct and such acquired insight as would suffice to preserve all but the dullest of natures from ludicrous indiscretion and perilous indelicacy—might perhaps for lack of experience be betrayed into such a succession of misdeeds as the training of an ideally rigid convent might have left it difficult or impossible for her fatuous innocence to foresee. But of the convent in which Mary Stuart had passed her novitiate the Lady Superior was Queen Catherine de' Medici. The virgins who shared the vigils of her maidenhood or brightened the celebrations of her nuptials were such as composed the Queen-Mother's famous 'flying

squadron' of high-born harlots, professionally employed in the task of making the worship of Venus Pandemos subserve the purposes of Catholic faith or polity, and occasionally, as on the Feast of St. Bartholomew, exhilarated by such diversions as the jocose examination of naked and newly-murdered corpses with an eye to the satisfaction of a curiosity which the secular pen of a modern historian must decline to explain with the frankness of a clerical contemporary. The cloistral precinct which sheltered her girlhood from such knowledge of evil as might in after days have been of some protection to her guileless levity was the circuit of a court whose pursuits and recreations were divided between the alcoves of Sodom and the playground of Aceldama. What were the vices of the society described by Brantôme it is impossible, or at least it would be repulsive, to suggest by so much as a hint: but its virtues were homicide and adultery. Knox or Ascham would have given plainer and juster expression, in shorter terms of speech more purely English, to the fact that no man was honoured who could not show blood on his hands, no woman admired who would not boast as loudly of the favours she had granted as her gallants of the favours they had received. It is but a slight matter to add that the girl who was reared from her very infancy in this atmosphere—in the atmosphere of a palace which it would be flattery to call a brothel or a slaughter-house—had for her mother a woman of the blood-stained house of Guise, and for her father the gaberlunzie-man or jolly beggar of numberless and nameless traditional adventures in promiscuous erotic intrigue.

The question of family is of course very far from conclusive, though certainly it may help 'to thicken other proofs that do demonstrate thinly.' The calender of saints includes a Borgia; or, to put it perhaps more forcibly, the house of Borgia contains a saint. And some writers—Landor among them, who had little love for the brood—have averred that the Bonaparte family did once produce an honest man and equitable ruler—Louis king of Holland, whose only son gave his life in vain for Italy. It would certainly have been no greater miracle than these, no more startling exception to the general rule, that the daughter of James V. and Mary of Guise should have been a blameless though imbecile creature, an innocent in the least flattering sense of the word, whose blood was very snow-broth and whose brain a very feather. But mere innocence, as distinguished from the absolute idiocy which even her warmest admirers would hesitate to ascribe to her, will hardly suffice to explain her course of conduct in the most critical period of her life. A woman who could play the part assigned to Mary by the Whitakers, Stricklands, Aytouns and Hosacks whose laudations have so cruelly libelled her, must have been either the veriest imbecile whose craven folly ever betrayed in every action an innate and irresponsible impotence of mind, or at least and at best a good girl of timid temper and weak intellect, who had been tenderly sheltered all her life from any possible knowledge or understanding of evil, from all apprehension as from all experience of wickedness and wrong. Now it is of course just barely possible that a girl might come innocent as Shakespeare's Marina even out of such a house of entertainment as that kept by the last

princes of the race of Valois: but it is absolutely and glaringly impossible that she should come forth from it ignorant of evil. And it is not a jot less impossible that an innocent woman who was not animally idiotic or angelically ignorant, a drivelling craven or a thing enskied and sainted, the pitifullest or the purest, the most thick-witted or the most unspotted of her kind, could have borne herself as did Mary after the murder of her caitiff husband. Let us assume, though it is no small assumption, that all her enemies were liars and forgers. Let us imagine that except among her adherents there was not a man of any note in all Scotland who was not capable of treason as infamous as that of the English conspirators on her behalf against the life of Elizabeth and the commonwealth of their country. Let us suppose that a Buchanan, for example, was what Mr. Hosack has called him, 'the prince of literary prostitutes': a rascal cowardly enough to put forth in print a foul and formless mass of undigested falsehood and rancorous ribaldry, and venal enough to traffic in the disgrace of his dishonourable name for a purpose as infamous as his act. Let us concede that a Maitland was cur enough to steal that name as a mask for the impudent malice of ingratitude. Let us allow that Murray may have been the unscrupulous traitor and Elizabeth the malignant rival of Marian tradition. Let us admit that the truest solution of a complicated riddle may be that most ingenious theory advocated by Mr. Hosack, which addresses to Darnley instead of Bothwell the most passionate and pathetic of the Casket Letters, and cancels as incongruous forgeries all those which refuse to fit into this scheme of explanation. Let us



grant that the forgers were at once as clumsy as Cloten and as ingenious as Iago. The fact remains no less obvious and obtrusive than before, that it is very much easier to blacken the fame of Mary's confederate enemies than to whitewash the reputation of Bothwell's royal wife. And what manner of whitewash is that which substitutes for the features of an erring but heroic woman those of a creature not above but beneath the human possibility of error or of sin?

But if we reject as incredible the ideal of Prince Labanoff's loyal and single-hearted credulity, does it follow that we must accept the ideal of Mr. Froude's implacable and single-eyed animosity? Was the mistress of Bothwell, the murderess of Darnley, the conspiratress against the throne and life of her kinswoman and hostess, by any necessary consequence the mere panther and serpent of his fascinating and magnificent study? This seems to me no more certain a corollary than that because she went to the scaffold with a false front her severed head, at the age of forty-five, must have been that 'of a grizzled, wrinkled old woman.' By such flashes of fiery and ostentatious partisanship the brilliant and fervent advocate of the Tudors shows his hand, if I may say so without offence, a little too unconsciously and plainly. And his ultimate conclusion that 'she was a bad woman, disguised in the livery of a martyr,' (vol. xii., ch. 34) seems to me not much better supported by the sum of evidence producible on either side than the counter inference of his most pertinacious antagonist that 'this illustrious victim of sectarian violence and barbarous statecraft will ever occupy the most prominent place in the annals of her sex'

(Hosack, vol. ii., ch. 27). There are annals and annals, from the *Acta Sanctorum* to the *Newgate Calendar*. In the former of these records Mr. Hosack, in the latter Mr. Froude, would inscribe—as I cannot but think, with equal unreason—the name of Mary Stuart.

‘She was a bad woman,’ says the ardent and energetic advocate on the devil’s side in this matter, because ‘she was leaving the world with a lie on her lips,’ when with her last breath she protested her innocence of the charge on which she was condemned to death. But the God of her worship, the God in whom she trusted, the God on whom she had been taught to lean for support of her conscience, would no more have been offended at this than the God of Dahomey is offended by human sacrifice. Witness all the leading spirits among his servants, in that age if in no other, from pope to king and from king to cutthroat—from Gregory XIII. and Sextus V. to Philip II. and Charles IX., and from Philip II. and Charles IX. to Saulx-Tavannes and Maurevel. To their God and hers a lie was hardly less acceptable service than a murder; Blessed Judas was a servant only less commendable than Saint Cain. Nor, on the whole, would it appear that the lapse of time has brought any perceptible improvement to the moral character of this deity. The *coup d’état* of August 24, 1572, was not an offering of sweeter savour in his expansive and insatiable nostrils than was the St. Bartholomew of December 2, 1851. From the same chair the vicar of the same God bestowed the same approving benediction on Florentine and on Corsican perjurer and murderer. And in a worshipper of this divine devil, in the ward of a Medici or a Bonaparte,

it would be an inhuman absurdity to expect the presence or condemn the absence of what nothing far short of a miracle could have implanted—the sense of right and wrong, the distinction of good from evil, the preference of truth to falsehood. The heroine of *Fotheringay* was by no means a bad woman : she was a creature of the sixteenth century, a Catholic and a queen. What is really remarkable is what is really admirable in her nature, and was ineradicable as surely as it was unteachable by royal training or by religious creed. I desire no better evidence in her favour than may be gathered from the admissions of her sternest judge and bitterest enemy. ‘Throughout her life,’ Mr. Froude allows, ‘she never lacked gratitude to those who had been true to her.—Never did any human creature meet death more bravely.’ Except in the dialect of the pulpit, she is not a bad woman of whom so much at least must be said and cannot be denied. Had she been born the man that she fain would have been born, no historian surely would have refused her a right to a high place among other heroes and above other kings. All Mr. Froude’s vituperative terms cannot impair the nobility of the figure he presents to our unapproving admiration : all Mr. Hosack’s sympathetic phrases cannot exalt the poverty of the spirit he exposes for our unadmiring compassion. For however much we may admire the courage he ascribes to her at the last, we cannot remember with less than contemptuous pity the pusillanimous imbecility which on his showing had been the distinctive quality of her miserable life. According to her champion, a witness against her more pitiless than John Knox or Edmund Spenser, she had done nothing

in her time of trial that an innocent woman would have done, and left nothing undone that an innocent woman would have studiously abstained from doing, if she had not been in the idiotic sense an innocent indeed. But it is in their respective presentations of the closing scene at Fotheringay that the incurable prepossession of view which is common to both advocates alike springs suddenly into sharpest illustration and relief. Mr. Froude cannot refrain from assuming, on grounds too slight for Macaulay to have accepted as sufficient for the damnation of a Jacobite, that on receipt of her death-warrant the queen of Scots 'was dreadfully agitated,' and 'at last broke down altogether,' before the bearers of the sudden intelligence had left her. Now every line of the narrative preceding this imputation makes it more and more insuperably difficult to believe that in all her dauntless life Queen Mary can ever have been 'dreadfully agitated,' except by anger and another passion at least as different from fear. But this exhibition of prepense partisanship is nothing to the grotesque nakedness of Mr. Hosack's. At a first reading it is difficult for a reader to believe the evidence of his eyesight when he finds a historian who writes himself 'barrister at-law,' and should surely have some inkling of the moral weight or worth of evidence as to character, deliberately asserting that in her dying appeal for revenge to the deadliest enemy of England and its queen, Mary, after studious enumeration of every man's name against whom she bore such resentment as she desired might survive her death, and strike them down with her dead hand by way of retributive sacrifice, 'exhibited an unparalleled instance of

feminine forbearance and generosity' (the sarcasm implied on womanhood is too savage for the most sweeping satire of a Thackeray or a Pope) 'in omitting the name of Elizabeth.' *O sancta simplicitas!* Who shall say after this that the practice of the legal profession is liable to poison the gushing springs of youth's ingenuous trustfulness and single-minded optimism?

An advocate naturally or professionally incapable of such guileless confidence and ingenuous self-betrayal is Father John Morris, 'Priest of the Society of Jesus,' and editor of 'The Letter-books of Sir Amias Poulet, Keeper of Mary Queen of Scots': a volume nothing less than invaluable as well as indispensable to all serious students of the subject in hand. Writers of genius and impetuosity such as Mr. Froude's and the late Canon Kingsley's lay themselves open at many points of minor importance to the decisive charge or the wary fence of an antagonist expert in the fine art of controversy: but their main or ultimate positions may prove none the less difficult to carry by the process of countermining or other sacerdotal tactics. Father Morris is not quite so hard on his client as Mr. Hosack: for by admitting something of what is undeniable in the charges of history against her he attenuates the effect and diminishes the prominence of his inevitable and obvious prepossessions: and though he suggests (p. 275) that 'perhaps Mary was not quite "the fiery woman"' Mr. Froude imagines her to have been,' he does not pretend to exhibit her as the watery thing of tears and terrors held up to our compassion by the relentless if unconscious animosity of the implacable counsel for her defence.

On one point (p. 143) the pleading of Father Morris must in no inconsiderable measure command the sympathy of all Englishmen who honestly love fair play, and that not only when it plays into their own hands. It is surely much more than high time, after the lapse of three centuries, that honest and generous men of different creeds and parties should be equally ready to do justice, if not to each other's God,—since Gods are by necessity of nature irreconcilable and internecine,—at least to the memories of their common countrymen, who played their part manfully in their day on either side with fair and loyal weapons of attack and defence. We regard with disgust and the horror of revolted conscience that vile and execrable doctrine which assures us in childhood that the glory of martyrdom depends on the martyr's orthodoxy of opinion, on the accuracy of his reckoning or the justice of his conjecture as to spiritual matters of duty or of faith, on the happiness of a guess or the soundness of an argument; but surely it profits us little to have cleared our conscience of such a creed if we remain incapable of doing justice to Jesuit and Calvinist, creedsman and atheist, alike. It profits us little if we are to involve in one ignominy with the unscrupulous and treasonous intrigues of Parsons and Garnet the blameless labours and the patient heroism of Edmund Campion. So far, then, Father Morris has a good card in hand, and plays it well and fairly, when he pleads, for example, against Mr. Froude's charges, and on behalf of his own famous Society, that "Gilbert Gifford had no "Jesuit training," and "the Order" never had anything to do with him;—but it is necessary to note that all through Mr. Froude's

*History* he habitually styles "Jesuits" those who never had anything in the world to do with the Society of which St. Ignatius Loyola was the founder.' Gilbert Gifford was a traitor, and any man must be eager to avoid the disgrace of any connection, though never so remote or oblique, with a traitor's infamy. But I hope it may not be held incompatible with all respect for the conscientious labours of Father Morris, and with all gratitude for help and obligation conferred by them, to remark with due deference that a champion of Jesuits against the malignant errors of calumnious misrepresentation would be wise to avoid all occasion given to heretical pravity for a scoff on the old scores of pious fraud or suggestion of falsehood. Exactly two hundred and five pages after this pathetic protest of conscious virtue and candid indignation against the inexcusable injustice of an anti-Catholic historian, this denouncer of Mr. Froude's unfair dealing and unfounded statements, 'the parallel of which it would be difficult to find in any one claiming to occupy the judicial position of a historian,' affords the following example of his own practical respect for historical justice and accuracy of statement.

'Not only,' he says, with righteous disgust at such brutality, 'not only would Poulet deprive Mary of Melville and du Préau, but, writing too from his own sick bed, he betrays his wish to remove the medical attendants also, though his prisoner was in chronic ill health.'

The whole and sole ground for such an imputation is given, with inconsistent if not unwary frankness, on the very next page but one in the text of Paulet's letter to Davison.

'The physician, apothecary, and the surgeon have been so often allowed to this lady by her Majesty's order, that I may not take upon me to displace them without special warrant, referring the same to your better consideration.'<sup>1</sup>

It is scarcely by the display of such literary tactics as these that a Jesuit will succeed in putting to shame the credulity of unbelievers who may be so far misguided by heretical reliance on a groundless tradition as to attribute the practice of holy prevarication, and the doctrine of an end which sanctifies the most equivocal means of action or modes of argument, to the ingenuous and guileless children of Ignatius. For refutation of these inexplicable calumnies and explosion of this unaccountable error we must too evidently look elsewhere.

An elder luminary of the Roman Church, the most brilliant and impudent chronicler of courtly brothelry between the date of Petronius and the date of Grammont, has left on record that when news came to Paris of the execution at Fotheringay the general verdict passed by most of her old acquaintances on the Queen Dowager of France was that her death was a just if lamentable retribution for the death of Chastelard. The despatch of a disloyal husband by means of gunpowder was not, in the eyes of these Catholic moralists, an offence worth mention if set against the execution of a loyal lover, 'even in her sight he

<sup>1</sup> 'Who would have thought,' says Father Morris, just seventy-four pages earlier, with a triumphant sneer at Mr. Froude's gratuitous inferences, 'who would have thought that all this could have been drawn out of Poulet's postscript?' Who would have thought that the merest novice in controversy could have laid himself so heedlessly open to such instant and inevitable retort?



loved so well.' That the luckless young rhymester and swordsman had been Mary's favoured lover—a circumstance which would of course have given no scandal whatever to the society in which they had grown up to years of indiscretion—can be neither affirmed nor denied on the authority of any positive and incontrovertible proof: and the value of such moral if not legal evidence as we possess depends mainly on the credit which we may be disposed to assign to the reported statement of Murray.<sup>1</sup> Knox, who will not generally be held capable of deliberate forgery and lying, has left an account of the affair which can hardly be regarded as a possible misrepresentation or perversion of fact, with some grain of discoloured and distorted truth half latent in a heap of lies. Either the falsehood is absolute, or the conclusion is obvious.

The first sentences of his brief narrative may be set down as giving merely an austere and hostile summary of common rumours. That Chastelard 'at that tyme passed all otheris in credytt with the Quene'; that 'in dansing of the Purpose, (so terme thei that danse, in the which man and woman talkis secreatlíe—wyese men wold judge such fassionis

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Hosack, with even unusual infelicity, observes (ii. 494) that 'the insinuations regarding Chatelar (*sic*) to be found in Knox were circulated long after the event.' According to the 'chronological notes' of Mr. David Laing (*Works of John Knox*, vol. i. p. 20) it is in 1566, just three years 'after the event,' that 'he appears to have written the most considerable portion of his History of the Reformation; having commenced the work in 1559 or 1560.' And whatever else may be chargeable against the memory of John Knox, this, I should imagine, is the first time that he has ever been held up to historic scorn as an insinuating antagonist.

more lyke to the bordell than to the comelynes of honest wemen,) in this danse the Quene chosed Chattelett, and Chattelett took the Quene'; that 'Chattelett had the best dress'; that 'all this winter' (1563) 'Chattelett was so familiare in the Quenis cabinett, ayre and laitt, that scarslye could any of the Nobilitie have access unto hir'; that 'the Quene wold ly upoun Chattelettis shoulder, and sometymes prively she wold steall a kyss of his neck'; these are records which we may or may not pass by as mere court gossip retailed by the preacher, and to be taken with or without discount as the capable and equanimous reader shall think fit. We may presume however that the prophet-humourist did not append the following comment without sardonic intention. 'And all this was honest yneuch; for it was the gentill entreatment of a stranger.' The kernel of the matter lies in the few sentences following.

'But the familiaritie was so great, that upoun a nycht, he prively did convoy him self under the Quenis bed; but being espyed, he was commanded away. But the bruyte aysing, the Quene called the Erle of Murray, and bursting forth in a womanlie affectioun, charged him, "That as he loved hir, he should slay Chattelett, and let him never speak word." The other, at the first, maid promesse so to do; but after calling to mynd the judgementis of God pronounced against the scheddaris of innocent bloode, and also that none should dye, without the testimonye of two or thre witnesses, returned and fell upoun his kneis befor the Quene, and said, "Madam, I beseak your Grace, cause me not tack the bloode of this man upoun me. Your Grace has entreated him so familiarlie befor, that ye have offended all your Nobilitie; and now yf he shalbe secreatlie slane at your awin commandiment, what shall the world judge of it? I shall bring him to the presence of Justice, and let him suffer

be law according to his deserving." "Oh," said the Quene, "ye will never let him speak?" "I shall do," said he, "Madam, what in me lyeth to saiff your honour."<sup>1</sup>

'Upon this hint I spake,' when in the last year of my life as an undergraduate I began my play of *Chastelard*; nor have I to accuse myself, then or since, of any voluntary infraction of recorded fact or any conscious violation of historical chronology, except—to the best of my recollection—in two instances: the date of Mary's second marriage, and the circumstances of her last interview with John Knox. I held it as allowable to anticipate by two years the event of Darnley's nuptials, or in other words to postpone for two years the event of Chastelard's execution, as to compile or condense into one dramatic scene the details of more than one conversation recorded by Knox between Mary and himself.

To accept the natural and unavoidable inference from the foregoing narrative, assuming of course that it is not to be dismissed on all accounts as pure and simple falsehood, may seem equivalent to an admission that the worst view ever yet taken of Queen Mary's character is at least no worse than was undeniably deserved. And yet, without any straining of moral law or any indulgence in paradoxical casuistry, there is something if not much to be offered in her excuse. To spare the life of a suicidal young monomaniac who would not accept his dismissal with due submission to the inevitable and suppression of natural regret, would probably in her own eyes have been no less than ruin to her cha-

<sup>1</sup> *The History of the Reformation in Scotland*, Book IV.: *The Works of John Knox*; collected and edited by David Laing, Vol. ii., p. 368.

racter under the changed circumstances and in the transformed atmosphere of her life. As, in extenuation of his perverse and insuppressible persistency in thrusting himself upon the compassion or endurance of a woman who possibly was weary of his homage, it may doubtless be alleged that Mary Stuart was hardly such a mistress as a man could be expected readily to resign, or perhaps, at Chastelard's age, to forego with much less reluctance than life itself; so likewise may it be pleaded on the other hand that the queen of Scotland could not without at least equal unreason be expected to sacrifice her reputation and imperil her security for the sake of a cast-off lover who could not see that it was his duty as a gentleman of good sense to submit himself and his passion to her pleasure and the force of circumstances. The act of Chastelard was the act of a rebel as surely as the conduct of Darnley three years afterwards was the conduct of a traitor; and by all the laws then as yet unrepealed, by all precedents and rights of royalty, the life of the rebellious lover was scarce less unquestionably forfeit than the life of the traitorous consort. Nobody in those days had discovered the inestimable secret of being royalists or Christians by halves. At least, it was an unpromising time for any one who might attempt to anticipate this popular modern discovery.

It must be admitted that Queen Mary was generally and singularly unlucky in her practical assertion of prerogative. To every one of her royal descendants, with the possible exception of King Charles the Second, she transmitted this single incapacity by way of counterpoise to all the splendid and seductive gifts which she likewise bequeathed to not a few of

their luckless line. They were a race of brilliant blunderers, with obtuse exceptions interspersed. To do the right thing at the wrong time, to fascinate many and satisfy none, to display every kind of faculty but the one which might happen to be wanted, was as fatally the sign of a Stuart as ever ferocity was of a Claudius or perjury of a Bonaparte. After the time of Queen Mary there were no more such men born into the race as her father and half-brother. The habits of her son were as suggestive of debased Italian blood in the worst age of Italian debasement as the profitless and incurable cunning with which her grandson tricked his own head off his shoulders, the swarthy levity and epicurean cynicism of his elder son, or the bloody piety and sullen profligacy of his younger. The one apparently valid argument against the likelihood of their descent from Rizzio is that Darnley would undoubtedly seem to have pledged what he called his honour to the fact of his wife's infidelity. Towards that unhappy traitor her own conduct was not more merciless than just, or more treacherous than necessary, if justice was at all to be done upon him. In the house of Medici or in the house of Lorraine she could have found and cited at need in vindication of her strategy many far less excusable examples of guile as relentless and retaliation as implacable as that which lured or hunted a beardless Judas to his doom. If the manner in which justice was done upon him will hardly be justified by the most perverse and audacious lover of historical or moral paradox, yet neither can the most rigid upholder of moral law in whom rigour has not got the upper hand of reason deny that never was a lawless act committed with more excuse or

more pretext for regarding it as lawful. To rid herself of a traitor and murderer who could not be got rid of by formal process of law was the object and the problem which the action of Darnley had inevitably set before his royal consort. That the object was attained and the problem solved with such inconceivable awkwardness and perfection of mismanagement is proof that no infusion of Guisian blood or training of Medicean education could turn the daughter of an old heroic northern line into a consummate and cold intriguer of the southern Catholic pattern. The contempt of Catherine for her daughter-in-law when news reached Paris of the crowning blunder at Kirk of Field must have been hardly expressible by human utterance. At her best and worst alike, it seems to my poor apprehension that Mary showed herself a diplomatist only by education and force of native ability brought to bear on a line of life and conduct most alien from her inborn impulse as a frank, passionate, generous, unscrupulous, courageous and loyal woman, naturally self-willed and trained to be self-seeking, born and bred an imperial and royal creature, at once in the good and bad or natural and artificial sense of the words. In such a view I can detect no necessary incoherence; in such a character I can perceive no radical inconsistency. But 'to assert,' as Mr. Hosack says (ch. 27), 'that any human being,' neither a born idiot nor a spiritless dastard, 'could have been guilty' of such utterly abject and despicable conduct as the calumnious advocates of her innocence find themselves compelled to impute to her, 'is,' as I have always thought and must always continue to think, 'an absurdity which refutes itself.' The

theory that an 'unscrupulous oligarchy at length accomplished her ruin by forcing her'—of all things in the world—'to marry Bothwell' is simply and amply sufficient, if accepted, to deprive her of all claim on any higher interest or any nobler sympathy than may be excited by the sufferings of a beaten hound. Indeed, the most impossible monster of incongruous merits and demerits which can be found in the most chaotic and inconsequent work of Euripides or Fletcher is a credible and coherent production of consistent nature if compared with Mr. Hosack's heroine. Outside the range of the clerical and legal professions it should be difficult to find men of keen research and conscientious ability who can think that a woman of such working brain and burning heart as never faltered, never quailed, never rested till the end had come for them of all things, could be glorified by degradation to the likeness of a brainless, heartless, sexless and pusillanimous fool. Supposing she had taken part in the slaying of Darnley, there is every excuse for her; supposing she had not, there is none. Considered from any possible point of view, the tragic story of her life in Scotland admits but of one interpretation which is not incompatible with the impression she left on all friends and all foes alike. And this interpretation is simply that she hated Darnley with a passionate but justifiable hatred, and loved Bothwell with a passionate but pardonable love. For the rest of her career, I cannot but think that whatever was evil and ignoble in it was the work of education or of circumstance; whatever was good and noble, the gift of nature or of God.







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